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OLD AND NEW





# OLD AND NEW

## SUNDRY PAPERS

BY

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CAMBRIDGE  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1920

B/5  
12/5

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## PREFACE

ALTHOUGH the following essays and addresses form rather a miscellaneous lot, they have this in common, that they treat, in general, of changes in fashion, especially in matters of speech and of school. Four of the papers have already appeared in print: "The Dark Ages," "Fashion and the Broad A," "Numeric Reform in Nescioubia," "Is Modern Language Teaching a Failure?" For permission to republish these I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness respectively to the Secretary of the Modern Language Association of America, the Editor of *The Nation*, the Secretary of the Simplified Spelling Board of New York, and the Editors of *The School Review*.

C. H. G.



## CONTENTS

I. NOR YET THE NEW . . . . .	3
II. FASHION AND THE BROAD A . . . . .	25
III. THE DOG'S LETTER . . . . .	31
IV. NUMERIC REFORM IN NESCIUBIA . . . . .	57
V. IS MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING A FAILURE? . . . .	65
VI. THE DARK AGES . . . . .	92
VII. NEW ENGLAND PRONUNCIATION . . . . .	121
VIII. SCHOOL . . . . .	150





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OLD AND NEW





# I

## NOR YET THE NEW<sup>1</sup>

Old things need not be therefore true,  
O brother men, nor yet the new.

WHEN Arthur Hugh Clough penned these lines, he little dreamed how quickly the second member of his apparently axiomatic proposition would become obsolete. “*New* things need not be therefore true”? It sounds like an echo from a forgotten past; yet only a few score years ago it was a perfectly safe assertion, as safe as “All’s not gold that glitters,” or “Where there’s a will there’s a way.”

There was a time when the old had the right of way and the new had to turn out or force its passage, when the idea of innovation gave pause, when the successful or even the unsuccessful experience of ages created a presumption in favor of accepted usage, when a departure from tradition demanded an excuse. “I love everything that’s old,” says one of the characters in *She Stoops to Conquer*, “old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine.” The same author once said: “When I was a young man, being anxious to distinguish myself, I was perpetually starting new propositions. But I soon gave this over; for I found that generally what was new was false.” Of wellnigh universal application was the opinion uttered later by Daniel Webster with reference to a certain political platform: “What is valuable is not new, and what is new is not valuable.”

<sup>1</sup> An address to the Smith College chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa on May 17, 1919.

"We have changed all that," as Molière's quack doctor observed. The heart and the liver no longer abide in the respective places to which the former school of medicine — and its accomplice, Dame Nature — assigned them. "Time-honored custom" is without honor. The very word "time-honored" is now used ordinarily in derision. To say that a thing is old is to condemn it without a trial. An old style must be a bad one, an old thought is not worth thinking. What we admire is the "music of the future," the "new art," the "modern school." To a strictly judicial mind, it would seem, the quality of age or of novelty would carry no necessary implication of value; the question of acceptance would be decided on the basis of intrinsic merit. But the judicial mind is rare. We are unconsciously swept along by the tide of opinion, and that tide has set in the direction of the untried. When did it turn?

I believe that the ancients (if one may venture a generalization) were preponderantly inclined to favor antiquity; not because they were ancients — for of this they were cheerfully unaware — but because the notion of progress was in their day foreign to the general run of men. This was surely the case in the Middle Ages. Only with the gradual enlargement of men's horizon by the unfolding and the penetration of a vanished glorious civilization, and by the discovery of unsuspected continents and races, did the taste for innovation develop, a love of change for its own sake, an eagerness to find in one's inner as well as in the outer world fresh fields to conquer, a desire to exploit the individual self; and this tendency was in the Renaissance tempered by a worship of ancient Rome and Greece. Then came, in the period we call neo-classical, a renewed submission to authority, a satisfaction with things as they are and as they have been. Yet we find in the eighteenth cen-

tury again a growing spirit of speculation, a battle of new ideas — for in those days they still had to battle.

With the French Revolution came an overturn in the procedure of judgment. Henceforth it is to be no longer the new, but the old, that must fight for its existence. The burden of proof is on tradition, the presumption is in favor of novelty. Let only a fashion be proclaimed as new, and its right to prevail finds general approval. The revolutionist becomes the popular hero. In an interesting article on "Theology in *Paradise Lost*," Professor R. E. Neil Dodge speaks thus of Satan:

But Satan has a higher claim on our attention than mere epic importance: he is the greatest embodiment in English poetry of one eternal type of the human spirit — the rebel. On this point, Milton could hardly have guessed the extraordinary future of his creation; for the rebel, as a human type entitled to respect and often to sympathy, was not recognized in Europe till the period of the French Revolution. Cromwell and the Puritans might be rebels, but only in the eyes of the Royalists: in their own eyes they were liberators. The term "rebel" was in itself a term of reproach, and was to remain such till the days of Byron. Milton, therefore, would be not a little perplexed at our strange modern sympathy with Satan, which to him would be almost incomprehensible.

This brings me to the real subject of my discussion, the fashion of rebellion. For the insurgent attitude has now become a pose. With sundry ups and downs, the fortune of the Miltonic Satan has prospered, until in our generation he has become a favorite society figure. The drawing-room anarchist, the literary rebel, the artistic iconoclast lay down the law for all of us. Among the conventions of the day, the most conspicuous is the convention of revolt. The only really unconventional person among us is the one who is not revolting against convention. If we wish to praise a young poet or painter, we must begin by making it plain that he is a revolter. Magazines, books, pictures are in

full tilt against some invisible adversary; and one must be very old-fashioned, as well as very bold, to ask whether the mysterious foe can by any possibility be a windmill. Occasionally, however, an elderly swimmer does contrive to lift his head sufficiently out of the flood to wonder what it is all about.

A good many years ago there was in Boston a national assembly of Christian Endeavorers. They swarmed in streets, shops, parks, eating-houses, one could scarcely stir without stepping on them; and their general aspect was that of holiday-makers. After conscientiously studying them for several days, an observer timidly inquired: "Are these people endeavoring to do anything in particular, or are they just endeavoring?" We might, if we dared, put a similar question to our revolvers: "Are you revolting against anything in particular, or are you just revolting?" Many of them, I suspect, would be at a loss for an answer; after a moment's cogitation, however, they would doubtless reply that they were revolting against the Victorian Age. And, in fact, the Victorian Age appears to be the special butt of their scorn. In the rich vocabulary of their terms of obloquy, "Victorian" is the very worst. It designates self-complacency, cant, hypocrisy, convention — not the convention of revolt, of course, but the convention of decency. Quite vainly would one plead that the Age of Victoria, rated according to genius, bids fair to take rank with the ages of Pericles, Augustus, Elizabeth, and Louis XIV; that future generations may possibly regard the time of Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, of Browning and Tennyson, of Arnold and Newman, of Mill and Darwin and Huxley and Spencer and Kelvin and Lister as rather a hard one to match in the annals of letters and science. Such a suggestion would, of

course, appeal only to critics who knew the Victorian Age and some other ages. One might, however, put forward with more confidence the consideration that the Victorian Age has been dead for a good while, and that it is a pure waste of hind-leg power to go on forever kicking at a corpse. Still, even that argument would probably be unavailing; so stubborn is the corpse-kicking habit, so firmly rooted is convention. Indeed, if I mistake not, I have never come across a convention more hide-bound than this same convention of revolt.

However, not all the "lords of convention" are corpse-kickers. Some of them kick against things that are still alive, such as duty, self-control, propriety. I have some hesitation in listing propriety among the living; but I believe it has not entirely succumbed to the new convention, although it has been the object of the most furious calcitrations. Marriage, of course, is doomed. So is work. None of the new ideal heroes are salt-earners; they are too busy with self-expression and self-development and self-analysis. The more one thinks of it, the more evident it becomes that all their interests begin with "self"; they are addicted to every "self" compound except self-support. What is to become of us when we shall all have adopted the new mode of existence, I cannot imagine. When all are parasites, what or whom are we to live on? The new livers should meditate on this, ere they push their propaganda too far. Another danger threatens them. I have just expressed some doubt regarding the longevity of their favorite victim, propriety — "sweet-tongued propriety," as André Chénier once called it, "*la décence au doux langage*." Now, if propriety should die, there could be no impropriety, inasmuch as the continuance of the latter is wholly contingent on the presence of the former. And if there were no impropriety,



they could no longer be improper, and life would have lost its savor. Nothing is so disheartening to a shocker as to find the "shockee" impervious to a shock. Of Baudelaire, who was a bit overfond of shocking, is told this tale, which is probably *ben trovato*. One day, having failed in all other efforts to startle, he dyed his hair green. A friend opportunely called, and the poet eagerly watched for a manifestation of horror. Not a sign: the caller chatted unconcernedly about the weather and the races, apparently unconscious of anything unusual. At last the poet could contain himself no longer. "Don't you see it?" he shouted. "See what?" "My hair!" "Well, what about your hair?" "Can't you see it's green?" shrieked Baudelaire. "Yes," drawled the other, with a yawn, "everybody's wearing green hair this season."

I am gratified to find myself in the company of the discriminating author of an article on "New Poetry and New America," G. R. Elliott, who writes as follows of the "new poets":

They keep on extravagantly wooing nature and extravagantly repudiating human convention. The prevailing creed of anti-conventionalism is perhaps most striking in the poetry of Miss Amy Lowell, since she pursues, more open-mindedly than any other present American poet, the purely aesthetic aim. She wishes to be tied by no dogma. But, as a matter of fact, she is tied to the dogma of anti-conventionalism. It is the single unifying theme which runs through all her volumes, providing the substance of some of her best poems (such as "Patterns") and of some of her worst. So fixed has the cult become! Mr. Frost, unconsciously but inevitably, gives the text of it in opening his *North of Boston*: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." That something is surely the spirit of our new poetry. Its hatred of the walls of human convention has itself become conventional. It is no longer the spontaneous poetic outbreak of a century ago, voicing a spontaneous social outbreak against dead conventions which had become intolerable. It is now a decadent cult-concept lingering on into a new age.

I cannot resist the temptation to quote a bit more of Mr. Elliott's criticism of the "new poetry":

Its call to salvation amounts to this: our great need at the present time is that we should face, more frankly than ever before, our destructive desires, and in thus facing them learn to master them. In facing those desires the new poetry, as already stated, has shown itself adept and vivid. But what is its notion of mastering them? The firmest answer to this question that I have been able to find in many volumes of new poetry is this of Mr. Oppenheim:

Be what you are;

Then you can take your desires and lift them and harness them;

Men that can harness Niagara can harness gluttony. . . .

The idea of putting on harness is so rare in our new poetry, and so prominent just now in our national state of mind, that one accepts it here with gratitude. If Mr. Oppenheim could only learn what the word harness means he would be in a fair way toward writing, or helping others to write, some fine national poetry. But unfortunately he has no more notion than his colleagues of what the word really means. The race-horses of desire run through the whole course of his poetry barebacked and without bridles. All thought of being harnessed in the sense of being controlled, either from within or from without, is expressly repudiated by the author again and again. In the code of Mr. Oppenheim and his colleagues, harnessing our desires means expanding them in such a way that, by an inexplicable transformation, our evil desires turn into good desires.

Now that our author has led us to the Imagists, I suppose it behooves me to include them in my survey, inasmuch as everybody is voluble about them, following the example so notably set by themselves. Not without reservation, however, do I class them as revolvers: they are by no means such out and out revolutionists as they think — or, I should rather say, as they would have us believe; for I suspect some of them, at least, of knowing more than they seem to know. They are quite aware, for instance, that while loudly proclaiming themselves midwives at the birth of a new art, they are really but imitators, translating into uncongenial Anglo-Saxon an artistic experiment

tried with some success in French, thirty-odd years ago. They must know, too, that through the French Symbolists they are the indirect issue of Walt Whitman, whom, for some reason, they seem inclined to avoid mentioning, as if he were a discreditable relation, rather than the most successful member of the family. Some of them, no doubt, have heard of *versi sciolti*, for several centuries a recognized poetic form in Italian. Indeed, the use of irregular rhythms was familiar to hoary antiquity: it may be found in the Hebrew psalms; in the cadenced prose of classic Latin; in the *cursus*, or fixed patterns for the ends of clauses, of the medieval Latinity; in the Church sequence, originally a piece of prose set to music. One may record in passing Tieck's experiments in polyphonic prose. There are only two new features in the modern *vers libre* movement: one is its typography, the other is the tremendous cackle raised over it. No, the free versifiers are but pseudo-Satans, devotees of near-novelty.

The Imagist claim to the invention of a hitherto unknown type of rhythm is easily exploded. It has been blown to flinders scientifically, with regular laboratory apparatus and uncompromising method, by Dr. W. M. Patterson of Columbia, in his remarkable book called *The Rhythm of Prose*. "According to the results of our experiments," he declares, "there is no psychological meaning to the claims for a third *genre* between regular verse and prose, except in the sense of a jumping back and forth from one side of the fence to the other." A similar conclusion may be reached, without resorting to time-sense machine or padded chamber, by the layman who will take the trouble to write out in short, irregular lines a choice passage of prose. The outcome is an Imagist poem, absolutely indistinguishable from an intentional one, except, perhaps, by



its weightier cargo of ideas. This experiment has been most convincingly performed by Professor J. L. Lowes, who, by the magic of typography alone, has transmuted various selections from the prose of George Meredith into Imagist poems indisputably better than any which the Imagists themselves have produced.

These new gentlemen, in fact, carry our minds back to Monsieur Jourdain, who all his life had been talking prose without knowing it. Furthermore, they do not even stick to their own principles. They tell us that the unit of poetry is the stanza, which is made up of a given series of cadences, and that these sequences are repeated from strophe to strophe. Now, I have failed to discover a single poem in which this rule is observed; and I have found only two or three in which there is apparent the least inclination to follow it. Some of the poets, however, would express the principle a bit differently: according to these, the essence of poetry is nothing more nor less than a happy succession of varied intonations — exactly my definition, acoustically speaking, of good prose as distinguished from bad prose. Some years ago, Professor F. N. Scott, of Michigan, worked out a plausible theory that the rhythm of prose is a rhythm of pitch, whereas the rhythm of poetry is a rhythm of accent. Whether he be right or wrong, there is in my mind not the slightest doubt that “free verse” is a particular development of prose, and not of poetry, as far as its form is concerned; its virtues are the recognized virtues of well written prose, its failures bring it into the category of mediocre prose. To say this is by no means to condemn it. The thing to be reprehended is the confusing misuse of the word “verse.” Tea and coffee are both of them excellent beverages; most of us enjoy them both, each at its proper hour; but nothing is gained by calling both of them tea.

Some distance back, I referred to Anglo-Saxon as an "uncongenial" medium for the reproduction of the essays of the *vers libristes* of France. In thus speaking I had in mind not so much the superior smoothness and delicacy of the French language as the nature of French metrics. The neo-Latins have never been accustomed to anything like the regular beat of English and German measures. Their traditional poetic movement, compared to ours, is so fluid that the step to free verse is a very short one, and necessitates no sharp break with old habits. It means a use of the same phrasing in lines of variable, instead of constant, length. Most of La Fontaine's fables, indeed, are to my ear composed in *vers libres*. For a Frenchman the real wrench comes when he tries to give up rime. For him, what determines the poetic structure is the harmony of endings, as, for us, the pattern of accents. And we need not be surprised to see that in a great part of French free verse, the rime is kept, though happily released from certain restrictions that appeal only to the eye. In Mallarmé, the leading theorist of the Symbolists, we find the same confusion of prose and poetry that I noted in our Imagists — with this significant difference, that Mallarmé is conscious of what he is doing. "Verse," he says, "exists everywhere in language where rhythm exists — everywhere, that is, but in advertisements and newspapers. In the genus we call prose there are verses, sometimes admirable ones, in all rhythms. But, really and truly, there is no such thing as prose: first there is the alphabet; after that, nothing but verses, more or less compact, more or less loosely knit. Every time that one strives for style, the result is versification. The official type of verse should be reserved for moments of soul-crisis. . . . Our present poets, instead of taking it as their starting-point, all of a sudden

let it spring up to crown a poem or a period." For the sensitive and dainty Mallarmé there is no drink but tea.

In conception, in substance, the Imagist work is for the most part essentially poetic. It is poetry of the most evanescent type, so tenuous in thought and feeling that only the most exquisite diction can justify its perpetuation in cold print. Such justification frequently makes itself felt as we read, whatever doubts may arise afterward. As we turn the pages of an Imagist volume, we seem to be idly watching a procession of pretty soap-bubbles, rising one after another, light, graceful, glittering, iridescent, to live in pure beauty for one instant and then fade into the atmosphere without leaving a trace. In truth, nothing definite is bequeathed to the memory. Our only picture, on closing the book, is the generic image of the bubble, the bright, fragile, aqueous film momentarily vivified by a gentle breath of tepid air. That is all; save that we may recall the names of some of the poets whose bubbling has given us most pleasure. Now and then we encounter an Imagist who belongs to a different class, his ebullitions being of a solider consistency. Such a one can describe a woodpile with such skill as to make his description exactly as interesting as the woodpile itself, and not without the woodpile's suggestion of labor. Another, cynically frolicsome, may exhaust himself in a macabre orgy; while a colleague may drearily observe in the universe a reflection of his own perversity and gloom. Another still, like a fanciful will-o'-the-wisp, appears to be mischievously eluding pursuit, and can scarcely be conceived otherwise — if tracked into privacy — than as all aquiver with gelatinous mirth over a huge hoax perpetrated on a band of solemn votaries.

I shall now ask you to make an abrupt but alliterative transition, from poetry to painting. I might speak of the

musical rebel, if I knew anything about music. But I do not; whereas I have at least a certain illusion of familiarity with painting and versifying through having dabbled a bit in these two arts. Now rebellion is just as rife in picture-making as in verse-making.

For still the new transcends the old  
In signs and tokens manifold.

It is on the one hand a more thorough-going rebellion, and on the other a less happy one in its results. Few products in the world of art have aroused such a mixture of pity and indignation as the output of the post-impressionists, the futurists, the cubists, the vorticists, and all the other *ists* that are wildly clutching for a straw of publicity.

Such labour'd nothings, in so strange a style,  
Amaze th' unlearn'd and make the learned smile.

Yet the painters have more excuse than the poets for their vagaries. In the first place, it must be observed that a painter generally expects to make his living from his art, while a poet almost always has other resources. Secondly, in numbers, good painters are to good poets as a hundred, perhaps a thousand, to one. As you walk the length of the endless picture galleries of Europe, as you tramp year by year, through the miles and miles and miles of perfectly good paintings in the annual *Salon* of Paris, just consider for a moment what is the chance of a livelihood for a poor devil whose only title to recognition is that he paints well! Why, everybody paints well. The museums, the exhibitions, the shops are crammed with beautifully executed pictures which nobody wants. A high standard of technical excellence has become so general that the capable artists outnumber the capable purchasers. To paint adequately is to be submerged in the crowd; to paint better than anyone

ever painted before is impossible; the only possibility of attracting notice lies in painting worse than anyone ever painted before. Hence the post-impressionists, the cubists, the futurists, the vorticists. A frenzied advertising, which will quickly defeat its own end; for already it is beyond anyone's power to do worse than has been done, and all that remains for the notoriety-seeker is to devise a new kind of worseness.

I do not mean to insist that no other factors have entered into these freak-producing movements. Human motives are always mixed; the course of events draws its water from many tributaries. There is constantly the inborn human desire to know, the craving for experimentation. Furthermore, an artist who is very hungry, very self-conceited, and very disappointed is likely to assume, in all honesty, that the world is rotten, that art has grown mechanical and needs a fresh formula; whereupon he proceeds to start a revolutionary school, and, if he be sufficiently unbalanced, is sure to find a following. This may come to pass even without the stimulus of physical hunger, so insatiable is the craving for publicity. Moreover, there is the general Satanic tendency of the time. It is almost as easy to Satanize in painting as in prose or poetry; and Satan is so much more romantic than Michael! The poet Richepin inaugurated a subsequently respectable career by the publication of a mildly unpleasant book of verse entitled *Blasphèmes*. Why should not a painter blaspheme a little — at any rate, just enough to make people look around? When a certain French sociologist — who was also an artist — was lecturing in Cambridge, he explained to one of his audiences how it was that a great political leader of his acquaintance came to be a socialist. The leader in question originally was an academic person, apparently cut out for



a straight conservative, or, at most, for a moderate radical. But he was also an orator, and an orator must orate; nay, when he has once tasted the blood of popular applause, he is a tiger, nevermore to be appeased. Now, a conservative may pronounce a smug and tidy address on imports and exports, but he cannot make you tingle; a moderate radical may utter an earnest exhortation, but his hearers' flesh does not creep nor does their hair stand on end. To thunder and lighten on the platform, one must be at least an advanced radical; to toss back one's locks and roll one's eyes, one must push on into socialism; for teeth-gnashing and the highest flights of rhetoric, nothing short of the most revolutionary brand will do. Thus our statesman, as the exigencies of his oratorical impulse augmented, progressively drifted to the left. Such, at least, was the lecturer's story.

Let us return to our sheep. It is a matter of common knowledge that the nature of these creatures is to follow their leader, even (we are credibly informed) when the leader jumps overboard, or — to take a less striking but more frequent occurrence — when he heads for the fold. It is even thus with our rebels and rebel chiefs. Jumping out of one convention, they bolt forthwith into another and a narrower one. All art is conventional, but to different degrees. The conventions of nineteenth century painting, from Ingres and Delacroix to Manet, being almost as broad and varied as nature herself, gave free scope to any type of genius. But with each new school in this present century has come a narrowing of convention, an exaggeration of the factitious and the esoteric. When we reach cubism, we have an art that contains no other ingredient than convention. To the intelligent but uninstructed observer a cubist picture means nothing at all; it arouses no pleasur-

able sensation, it suggests no thought, it carries no message. Only when we have been provided with a key can we penetrate the mysteries of the artist's intention; and then our sole feeling is one of surprise that he should have thought it necessary to keep such property locked up. Our champions of freedom have not merely swapped old bondage for new; they have exchanged a camp for a cell.

In the various realms of art — in prose and poetry, in music, in painting and sculpture (architecture, curiously enough, seems to have been little affected) — in the realms of art, Bolshevism, though it may occasionally try our temper and interfere with our enjoyment, has not seriously threatened our health. It becomes, on the contrary, a real menace when it invades the fields of politics and of education. Of its political aspect I shall not speak, for I can say nothing that most people have not thought and heard many times. Pedagogical revolution, on the other hand, has, I believe, never been — to express myself in pedagogical terminology — adequately apperceived nor properly correlated with Imagism, Vorticism, and Nihilism. Yet only a moment's reflection is needed to show that they all are manifestations of the same Satanistic movement. All are based on the assumption that whatever has been customary must be bad, and that anything which is or seems novel must be good. The title of "Modern School" carries conviction, no matter how fantastic its program. Its projector bids us discard the studies that have for centuries been our intellectual bread and meat, because, he avers, they have not sufficiently proved their worth; and then he would have us fill up our depleted curriculum with subjects whose worth has not even been tried. Always the same naïve faith in newness! His eventual test of worthiness, it would seem, is to be popularity. A topic which the

children avoid is unworthy, one that they prefer is worthy. As if the pupils' choice, in general, were not determined by their estimate of the comparative difficulty of the subjects! Yet the Modernists assure us that the new studies are to be intrinsically quite as hard as the old. Well, if they are, I venture to prophesy that they will promptly become quite as unpopular; whereupon they will have to give way to newer ones whose hardness is still unknown, and these will yield the place to newest and very newest. There is no stopping-point in this course.

The whole Modernist propaganda is based on the false assumption that knowledge can be acquired without painfully conscious effort, if we but pick out alluring kinds of knowledge. It ignores the fundamental fact that to the normal man or woman, and still more to the normal child, labor is unpleasant. Work was given to our first parents, not as a reward, but as a punishment. I do not mean to say that there is no joy in work; but the joy that is in it is the joy of accomplishment, which comes into bloom with the completion of the task, and does not begin to bud until the end is in sight. Always cruel is the beginning, the act of will that sets the machinery going, especially if there be a period of doubt or a chance of evasion. As we grow older, we lose our youthful hopefulness, our expectation of a miracle — such as breaking a leg before school opens — that may postpone the dreaded moment. We form the habit of taking up each task mechanically, without debating the question whether we shall do so or not. Furthermore, with the lengthening sight of age, we see the end from a greater and greater distance, and the anticipatory satisfaction of achievement sets in at an increasingly early stage. Such is our reward for having formed the habit of doing our job, whether we liked it or not. Woe to him who has never



subjected himself to this discipline, who has never taught himself to obey the command of duty, who all through life suffers the agony of dilatory beginning without the happy prospect of a speedy and successful finish!

The Modernist error is due in large measure to a confusion of work and play. Both are natural, both are needed, and both give satisfaction. Yet they are opposites, not different names for the same thing. The pleasure of work comes from the consciousness of power, the stimulus of tense application, and the contemplation of the constant approach of the desired result; its joy is progressive; it is happiest of all in retrospect. The delight of play consists in relaxation, in yielding, unhampered, to the primitive instincts, in concentration on the present moment; its satisfaction is rather of the *diminuendo* than the *crescendo* type, and attains perhaps its maximum just before the sport really begins. To turn play into an obligatory item in the curriculum is to rob it of its sunshine. To attempt, on the other hand, to make play out of work is to beget a monster that is neither the one nor the other.

The great danger of the Modernistic theory lies in its coincidence with the innate laziness of man. When pedagogical Satans are proclaiming from the housetops that Latin and Greek and mathematics are not only hard and uninteresting, but useless, how can children, or even parents, be blamed for demanding that these outworn studies be abolished and replaced by brand new ones vaguely imagined as both profitable and entertaining? Entertainment is what schoolboys are now led to expect; and, as it is what their primeval instinct craves, they are disappointed if the school is not a hall of unbroken amusement. It must be remembered that in this country the schools are really under the government of the pupils: the

American child governs his parents, the parents elect the School Boards, and these manage the schools. Although the control is indirect, the sovereignty resides in the children.

With the New Education there has appeared on the scene the New Educator, known as the Educational Expert. Do not imagine that an Educational Expert is a person who has ever educated anybody: no, he is one whose business it is to tell others how to do it; his expertness has been acquired, not in the school, but in the laboratory. In the old days a teacher who had distinguished himself in his work would in time become principal of a school; then, as the years went on, if he proved himself equally capable in his latter position, he might be made superintendent. That was the kind of expert on whom we used to rely. It is all different now. The teaching and the supervising functions are separate from the start; some are trained to teach, others to superintend. You know what is meant by an Efficiency Expert in a factory. He is a man who calculates not only the most economical disposition and use of machinery, but also the most time-saving motions of body and limbs, the hours of the day at which people can work under highest tension, the proportion of pressure and relaxation conducive to a maximum output. In the imagination of the workingman, the Expert is an ogre who stands over him with a stop-watch in one hand and a club in the other, ready to "swat" him if he diminishes his speed by a fraction of a second or deviates a hair's breadth from the prescribed and never-changing movements of his hands. Now what the Efficiency Expert is to industry, that the Educational Expert aims to be to pedagogy. It is as unnecessary for him to have been a teacher as for the Efficiency man to have been a laborer. Loaded to the muzzle with statistics, principles of management, educational theory, and peda-

gical psychology, he is prepared to apply to the children the very latest system of intellectual feeding and to exact from the teacher all the calculable motions of maximum efficiency. He talks a language of his own, almost philosophic in its unintelligibility to the layman.

A man in all the world's new fashion planted,  
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain.

Above all, he is "aggressive." Has it ever struck you how the use of this adjective has changed since Satanism came into vogue? If a man is wanted for any kind of job — mayor, floor-walker, professor, or secretary of a peace conference — he must be "aggressive." School principals, in recommending boys to the college admission committee, take special pains to note whether the lads are "aggressive" or not. "Smith does not rank very high in his studies, but he is a natural leader, captain of the football team, president of his class, and editor of the school paper, a fine, manly, *aggressive* young fellow, who, I am sure, will, if admitted, do no discredit to the college." "Jones is an excellent scholar, fond of books, a young man of high standards and the strictest sense of honor, but not conspicuous in leadership — in fact, if the truth must be told, rather lacking in *aggressiveness*, a fault which a college atmosphere will doubtless correct." After sundry abortive resolves, I have looked up "aggressive" in the International Dictionary. You may be surprised to learn that it means "tending or disposed to aggress." But I did not stop there. Following up the trail, I found that "to aggress" is "to commit the first act of hostility or offense; to begin a quarrel or controversy; to make an attack." This *summum desideratum* of Modernism is, therefore, in the plain English of a few years ago, a "disposition to commit the first act of hostility

or offense." Let us not forget who it was that "committed the first act of hostility or offense," who first "began a quarrel or controversy": Satan.

Fortunately it is not upon the child that the Educator's expert aggressiveness is wreaked, but upon the teacher. The child must be kept in good humor, or he will become aggressive himself, and then good-bye to the Expert. But who cares what happens to the teacher? She — for it nearly always is a she — ought to regard it as a privilege to be coached in the latest tackles, to be forced to keep up with educational theory from day to day, to have to devote her school hours largely to experiments and records. It is always a comfort to know that you are doing a thing exactly according to the right formula. "We have reached a point," recently declared an Educator in a public meeting, "where Education is as exact a science as mathematics." Observe what an advance we have made over the casual and impulsive Mr. Gradgrind, who never would have dared to put forth such a claim as that. Another Expert gladdens our hearts by assuring us that it is unnecessary to study algebra or geometry; all agree in the doctrine that the acquisition of facts of any kind is positively deleterious. I once heard a Superintendent exclaim: "At last we have got the colleges where we want 'em. They've got to take what we say. If we say that a course in blacksmithing and nothing else is a proper preparation for college, the colleges have got to accept blacksmithing as a preparation." This is a note of frequent recurrence, a warning note, which means that if our colleges do not stand firm, they will presently become institutions in which blacksmiths are taught the alphabet and the multiplication table, and all education above the primary stage will have vanished from the land. If I do not quote more abundantly from the

utterances of Educators, it is not because there is any dearth of material. Such an idea would immediately be dispelled by a glance at their Reports. Once, after a very full demonstration by an Efficiency Expert, an auditor remarked: "You Experts seem to have devised a way to economize everything except words."

Let us return for a moment to our advocate of blacksmithing. It is no doubt an admirable thing to afford boys and girls a free, easily accessible means of learning the trades by which they are to gain a livelihood; and I can see that there may be a distinct advantage in beginning this instruction very early. Self-respect, earnestness, alacrity may well be increased by the consciousness that one is on the way to independence. The mistake comes in assuming that such training is the equivalent of education, in the sense in which this term has generally been used. Vocational study may be a precious supplement to education, but cannot be a substitute for it. Unless men and women are to turn into unthinking mechanisms — as our various Experts apparently would have them — they must possess some resources outside their particular work; they must acquire some general outlook on the world, some conception of what the generations of men have thought and wrought. Unless they be initiated into this intellectual life in their schooldays, they are likely to remain dummies ever after — good mechanics, no doubt, but failures as human beings, and incompetents if we consider them as responsible members of a democracy. Humanity, after all, is more precious than efficiency. We can better afford to sacrifice some share of the latter than to stunt the former.

The former it is, however, that has been slighted by our Modernist revolvers — be they pedagogical, artistic, or literary — all of them prone, as we have seen, to tie them-



selves up with arbitrary formulas and to plunge into the bondage of an unnatural convention. A common tendency to depart from the normally human, in a chase after some variety of abnormal effectiveness, seems to be the consequence of basing one's philosophy on the gratuitous assumption that the new must surpass the old. As prophets of the super-new, our super-efficient revolutionists turn their backs upon experience, forgetting that Satan fell because of overconfidence in his own efficiency. Lest we also fall, let us fortify ourselves against the foul fiend by repeating Clough's wise motto:

Old things need not be therefore true,  
O brother men, *nor yet the new.*

And let us join (of course metaphorically) in the prayer of worthy Bishop Still:

But belly, God send thee *good* ale enough,  
*Whether it be new or old!*

## II

### FASHION AND THE BROAD A<sup>1</sup>

“THERE was a silence for a brief space, after my somewhat elaborate exposition of these self-evident analogies. Presently *a person* turned towards me — I do not choose to designate the individual — and said he rather expected my pieces had given pretty good ‘sahtisfahction.’” Thus wrote the genial Autocrat in 1857. “Sahtisfahction” was then one of those expressions “that fix a man’s position for you before you have done shaking hands with him”; a “prahctical mahn” was another. Nowadays such a pronunciation would simply mark the speaker as a probable Scotchman; but in the New England of 1840 to 1860 the broad *a*, a sound of comparatively recent introduction, was running riot through countrified and vulgar speech; in such words as *handsome*, *matter*, *Saturday*, one may still occasionally hear it from the lips of an elderly rustic.

When I was a boy of nine or so, I struck up an intimacy with a Yankee peddler, a man of sociable disposition and infinitely persuasive tongue, though a stranger to books. For him I painted signs and composed circulars, chiefly designed, as I remember, to exalt the virtues of a certain magic liniment in which he dealt. Would it were possible for me now to cherish towards anything in the world such unquestioning faith as I had in his liniment — a faith which

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *The Nation* of January 7, 1915.

I am convinced the excellent man fully shared! And would that any journey could now afford me such keen delight as I took in my peregrinations aboard a broom-masted and pan-girt wagon over the quiet, sun-flooded roads of central Massachusetts! For by way of compensation for literary services rendered, my kindly commercial friend used to let me drive his horse. Vivid indeed is my recollection of our halts before shaded homesteads, our protracted and usually successful parleys with lean housewives, hungry for conversation. Then, after adequate preliminary discussion of weather and harvest, of the havoc wrought by "cahterpillars" on the "ahple" and "che'y" crop, were shiny tins produced, "notions" of all sorts, goods for the "pahntry," "gimblets," and "hahmers."

"Ahples" have decayed, "hahmers" have been laid on the shelf. At present, New England restricts the "ah" vowel, in the main, to a few specific classes of words — especially those in which an *a* (sometimes an *au*) is followed by a final *r*, by an *r* that precedes another consonant, by an "m" written *lm*, or by the sound of "f," "s," or "th": as *far*, *hard*, *balm*, *laugh*, *pass*, *rather*, *path*. In the first two categories, and in the word *father*, "ah" possesses nearly all the English-speaking territory; concerning the other classes, there is wide divergence, although flat *a* appears everywhere to be disappearing from words like *balm*. Yankeeedom itself is divided over such combinations as *ant*, *can't*, *dance*, *example*, in which a nasal and another consonant follow the vowel; *aunt*, however, always has broad *a*. "Ah," in this region, is best preserved in rural communities and among people of fashion, the latter being more or less under British influence. For, in southern England, the style is essentially the same as in the typical Yankee village, save that the "ah" is of a broader quality.



In our ordinary urban speech, "ah" before *n*, and also before *f*, *s*, and *th* (except in *father*), has been losing ground of late. Not long since, one of our legislators was derided by a fellow law-giver — presumably a member of the politically dominant race — for saying "Nahahnt," the only pronunciation by which the peninsula of Nahant is known to our native seamen.

In the United States beyond the Hudson — perhaps beyond the Connecticut — the flat *a* prevails before *f*, *s*, *th*, and *n* — "häf," "päst," "räther," "päth," "chänce"; although there is a little "ah" spot in Virginia. Nevertheless, a perceptible leveling process is going on, due partly to travel, to the example of actors and lecturers, still more to schools. Curiously enough, it is very common for teachers in the "ä" dominion to inculcate "ah," and for "ah"-born pedagogues to insist on "ä." Inasmuch as the "ä" country is vastly the more extensive, one may assume that by this scholastic tendency "ah," in the land as a whole, is gaining converts faster than "ä." What the outcome shall be, no one can tell. Usage is forever changing, and almost always inconsistent. The Yankee naturally says "cahnt" for *can't*, but never for the noun *cant*. Of two Cambridge brothers, aged three and four, who had never been away from home and never separated, one invariably said "bahsket," the other "bäsket," although both parents pronounced "bahsket."

Great have been the shifts of fashion with regard to our first vowel. It is a common belief that English and Yankee "ah" represents the older style of speech; but the contrary is true. The fast West is in this matter more conservative than the pahst-loving East. Earlier English "ah" became "ä" by the sixteenth century, and until 1780, or thereabouts, the standard language had no broad

a. People said not only "fäst," but "fäther," "fär," "hård." By "ä" I am designating, of course, the quality, not the duration, of the sound. Benjamin Franklin, who in 1768 recorded phonetically the pronunciation of his day, knew no "ah," although he maintained that additional letters were needed to represent two other vowels, the "u" of *hut* and the "aw" of *law*. This was in his *Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling*. Sheridan, in 1780, has no "ah" in his list of vowel sounds. Not until 1784 do we come upon something like it, in Nares's *Elements of Orthoepey* (London). Seven years later, Walker reports a practice that is virtually the present southern English one. The evidence we possess seems to indicate a very sudden incursion of "ah" into London speech between 1780 and 1790. For many years after that, however, "ah" and "ä" contended for the supremacy.

In America, it would appear, broad *a* was slower in getting a foothold. Very few traces of it are to be found in the eighteenth century. Noah Webster, in his *Dissertations on the English Language*, 1789, prefers "ä" even in *aunt*, as well as in *jaunt*, *sauce*; but in 1806 he finds a place for "Italian *a*" in such words as *ask*, *dance*, *demand*, *father*, *psalm*. Yet Alden, in 1813 (*An Introduction to Spelling and Reading*, sixth edition), gives no recognition to the new sound, prescribing "bärk" with the vowel of *back*, and "lawf" for *laugh*. Meanwhile, contradictory testimony comes from an *Essai Raisonné sur la Grammaire et la Prononciation Angloise à l'usage des François qui désirent d'apprendre l'Anglois*, par Duncan Mackintosh et ses deux filles, Boston, 1797, in which, besides the usual *ärt*, *fär*, *lärge*, *bäth*, *dänce*, *quäff*, etc., we are confronted with "ah" in *arm* and in *are* — this latter word being elsewhere in the eighteenth century always described as "air." Further-

more, Mackintosh would have us pronounce "ah" in a long list of words in which present-day Boston knows only "ă": *Daniel*, for instance, *Italian*, *imagine*, *navigate*, *Paris*, *rational*, *travel*, *satisfy*, and so on. One cannot help suspecting a Scottish strain in his pronunciation; and this suspicion is confirmed by his remark that it takes a very delicate ear to distinguish the *i* of *bid* and *hit* from the *u* of *bud* and *hut*.

In 1830 appeared Worcester's first dictionary, containing both "ah" and a sound intermediate between "ah" and "ă," which latter he recommends — as some of his English predecessors had done — for use before *f*, *s*, *th*, and nasals. "To pronounce the words, *fast*, *last*, *glass*, *grass*, *dance*, etc.," he declares, "with the proper sound of short *a* as in *hat*, has the appearance of affectation; and to pronounce them with the full Italian sound of *a*, as in *part*, *father*, seems to border on vulgarism." The compromise vowel which he, and others, tried to introduce, never met with much success. It is too closely akin to the two extremes. In New England especially, where "ah" and "ă" are less remote from each other than in most of the present English-speaking world, it is hard to establish a vowel between them. In spite of dictionaries and teachers, people have continued to use, in the doubtful words as in the others, either the broad or the flat *a*.

From Worcester's statement, and from other evidence, we may infer that "ah" first prevailed in vulgar speech, and that "făst," as late as 1830, retained a flavor of by-gone preciousness. Today, on the contrary, in the consciousness of most Americans, "fahst" implies a striving after old-world elegance, while "făst" is characteristic of up-to-date democracy. Thus do we change our vowels, as our garments, in accordance with the inscrutable decrees of

Fashion. The pride of yesterday is the scorn of today. Broadway Jones would despise both the sartorial and the linguistic style which to "the young man whom they call John" (for I am sure it was he) gave unqualified "satisfaction."

### III

## THE DOG'S LETTER

HUMANITY'S most primitive satisfaction, next to the fulfilment of physical needs, is the sense of power. Before the child has acquired the art of standing on two limbs, he finds a way of gratifying man's innate desire to be a controlling factor in the universe. At first by repeated accident, then by vaguely conceived experiment, he learns that certain movements of his hands or feet — certain muscular contractions that can be produced at will — are capable of causing results perceptible to eye and ear, nay, startling and momentous in the little world he inhabits. Adult life holds in reserve no joy so complete as that of shattering, with one swift touch, an elaborately constructed pinnacle of blocks. Indeed, so keen is the pleasure, and so impatient the expectation, that oftentimes the craving defeats its own end, prematurely launching the fateful blow and demolishing the edifice ere the height thereof is sufficient to generate a complete portion of uproar in its demolition; even as the over-ambitious statesman, snatching at the crown before his popularity is ripe, may have to content himself with a lieutenant-governorship.

“The sports of grown-ups,” wrote St. Augustine, “are called business; but when children indulge in like business, the grown-ups punish them.” Tragic is the time when the infant transfers his attention from blocks to vases, flower-pots, or fragile articles of furniture. Then he experiences, to his amazement and rage, the fickleness of favor; ap-

proving smiles are turned to scowls, sweet baby-talk to words of harshness, caresses perhaps to disgraceful smacks. Fortunately the outraged autocrat has at his command a means of coercion acquired long before the block-building age, a method discovered and assiduously practised in the early days of cradlehood. By the proper exercise of diaphragm, larynx, and jaw — an exercise usually begun at the moment of entrance into this world of sorrow — he can create an aerial disturbance, perceived by the ear as sound, which will compel attention and, not infrequently, obedience. Scientific experiment has ascertained how many trials are needed by a rat to grasp the idea that by taking a particular turn or giving a special push he can penetrate from one chamber of his prison-house to a more desirable one; but who shall say how quickly the babe apprehends the relation between the causative howl and its effect, the demanded ministration ?

“The first cries of babies are entreaties; if one is not careful, they soon become orders.” So says Rousseau. “Children begin by getting assistance, and end by getting service. . . . When the infant stretches out his hand, with an effort, and in silence, he expects to reach the object, having no estimate of its distance; he is simply mistaken. But when he whines and yells as he extends his hand, he is no longer in error about the distance, he is either commanding the object to approach or commanding you to bring it to him. . . . No sooner do children reach the stage of regarding the people who surround them as instruments which it is in their power to operate, than they make use of them to follow out their own inclination and to supplement their own weakness. That is how they become troublesome, tyrannical, imperious, ill-natured, stubborn — a progress which does not spring from an inborn spirit of domination,



but which imparts that spirit to them; for no long experience is needed to perceive how agreeable it is to work with other people's hands and to be able to move the universe merely by moving one's tongue."

Our tyrant, however, is not always tyrannizing. He has his innocuous moments, in which he reveals an interesting, almost attractive side. As he lies in his crib, dimly aware that by sundry mysterious exertions he can make a noise, he frequently uses this strange and fascinating power, not for domination, but for the sheer gratification of his sense of being somebody. Long before he can achieve any preconcerted result with hands or feet, he is able to produce intentionally several varieties of sound, which afford him the same kind of pleasure that is later to be derived from the toppled blocks. His joy comes from the perceptible realization of a purpose. Birds, no doubt, rejoice in their song for the same reason. An act of volition is translated into an audible product, which, as time goes by, is artistically developed, and which, at all stages, is proof of power.

Inasmuch as this power must, in the first instance, be revealed to the child by chance, by the oft-repeated hearing of a noise inadvertently brought forth, it is evident that the earliest acoustic experiments must be such as require only a current of air blown through a vocal apparatus unprepared. Before anything else, comes a nasal vowel of uncertain character; next follow sundry modifications of this utterance by shutting and opening the lips: *wawa*, *mama*, *baba*, *papa*. At the teething period, when the point of the tongue instinctively seeks the sore gums, we begin to hear dental consonants: *nana*, *dada*, *tata*. If, in an energetically bright mood, the child sends forth a vigorous puff through a mouth loosely closed, the alternate sudden separation of the lips by the passing exhalation and the immediate

return of the pair to position, allowing an intermittent out-flow while the breath lasts, can be heard as a purr, delightful to the ear of the juvenile practitioner. Such a noise (which we may call a labial trill) is occasionally made by adults to express cold; preceded by a firm closure of the lips — that is, a *p* — it may denote exhaustion. This combination, made sonant by simultaneous vibration of the vocal chords, is sometimes employed by German coachmen to stop a horse: *brr*. The sonant purr, very loud and shrill, mostly without the *b*, is used by noisy girls here at home as a call.

The lip-trill is not utilized as a regular element of speech by any civilized people, being too wasteful of breath and too hard to combine with other sounds, except *b* and *p*; but I believe it has been reported as a feature of some savage tongue. Two other trills, however, have found general acceptance as speech sounds. One is a vibration of the front rim of the tongue against the gums or the forward part of the roof of the mouth: the tongue's edge, made very thin, is held in light contact with the surface behind the teeth; it is now pushed aside by the escaping air, now restored to its place by its own resiliency. This trill, when sonant, as it usually is, we often call the "Italian *r*." It exacts a good supply of breath, though not so much as is required for the labial purr; it demands also a nice adjustment. For these reasons, no doubt, it is seldom produced by the infant; indeed, it frequently remains a difficult sound for the child who is learning to speak. If, on the other hand, the vibration be made, not with the tongue-tip, but with the uvula, it calls for little breath and, once started, can be long continued without exertion. The uvula is the small muscular tag that dangles, in the back of the mouth, from the middle of the lower edge of the velum, or soft palate. To produce



the vibration, the back of the tongue is so raised that the uvula rests upon it, fitting, when the operation is neatly performed, into a central groove which furrows the tongue from rear to front. The air, as it runs out over the tongue, lifts the light tag, which then falls, to be at once lifted again; and thus arises a flapping movement heard as a trill. When surd, or voiceless, it is the usual type of *jota*, the Spanish *j*. When voiced, or sonant, it is the *r* commonly heard in the cities of France and Germany. This trill is one of the delights of early babyhood, even in countries where the sound is unknown to adults. Lying on its back, with gently flowing breath, the infant "hur-reth" to its heart's content, though nearly always, I fancy, without premeditation.

Let us suppose, however, that our juvenile triller dwells in a land where the trill forms one of the recognized elements of speech. In this case, he may profitably turn pleasure into business, preserving the noise of his early delectation and making use of it in the more earnest pastime of imitating those mysteriously significant sequences of sounds which issue from the lips of mature experience. If maturity prefers to the easy-going flutter of the uvula a more exacting whirr of the tongue-tip, the child is constrained to forget the former and accept the latter, often at considerable expense. Most European languages employ one or the other of these vibrations, which for the non-trilling foreigner constitute the chief difficulty in the way of learning to speak those idioms. An Englishman or an American, for instance, who would acquire either Italian or French must first acquire the vibratory habit, and first of all must acquire the belief that the canine consonant is really a possibility and a necessity; to which end he must gradually eradicate his settled conviction that the Italians and the French are wrong in

pronouncing as they do, a practice excusable only in consideration of their inability to speak plain English. That Anglo-Saxon is doomed to failure who sets out to conquer a continental tongue and fails to concentrate his attack on the *r*. By him, the Italian *poco* is heard as *porco*; and while his heart says *carne*, his mouth says *cane*. Let him reflect that in practising a vexatious and unseemly trick of internal gymnastics he is merely reverting to the custom of his ancestors; let him remember that, only a few generations ago, the men of Merrie England were as whirry and burry as the best of them.

It is, in fact, not an uncommon procedure for a language, in the course of time, to relax the severity of the whirring requirement and content itself with a little buzz emanating from the quarter where the whirr should be produced. Thus the French or the German ear is nowadays often satisfied by a weak rasping noise made in the back of the mouth, a sort of delabialized *w*. Similarly English, whose earlier *r* was of the Italian type, has in modern times generally reduced it to a vague fricative, withdrawing the tongue-point so far from the front of the palate that a continuous and rather spacious channel replaces the valvular flip-flap of older days. Spanish seems a bit inclined to follow the same course, when the *r* is neither initial nor double; but the more vociferous Italian is less ready to yield. In a great part of the United States — a region, let us say, north of the Ohio and stretching from the Hudson to the Rockies — the retracting tendency is exaggerated and the tip of the tongue is curled up toward the middle of the roof of the mouth, leaving a curiously shaped passage, which, though very wide, strikingly modifies the acoustic effect of the outgoing breath. A similar pronunciation may be heard in Kent. This strange sound, which seems to afford its

utterers an inexplicable satisfaction, does not convey in the least the impression of an *r* to anyone accustomed to either variety of the trill; it suggests merely an obstructed formation of the preceding vowel. The Middle Western *par*, *court*, for example, impress the unpractised ear rather as *pa*, *coat* spoken with one's mouth full.

We have found, then, apart from the labial purr, two types of trilled *r*, the uvular and the lingual, and for each of these an untrilled substitute. Which of these came first in the history of human speech? Inasmuch as the uvular vibration is so natural to the child, one would suppose that it must have led the way; but there is no evidence that such was the case. Perhaps in the heroic age both men and babes had mightier breath. Hercules, who strangled snakes in his cradle, may have celebrated his triumph with a lingual athleticism impossible to an infantile generation that was "orba di tanto spiro." Be that as it may, we can find no sign of a primitive utilization of the mobile uvula. From prehistoric days to the eighteenth century, at least in western Europe, the normal *r* appears to have been a whirr, strong or feeble, of the tongue-tip. Beside this, however, we must assume that there existed, at least in some periods and in some regions, a wholly untrilled variety; otherwise we could never account for at least one peculiar development that occurred in several branches of our Indo-European family. In these — in Latin and in Germanic under certain conditions — an *s* between vowels changed to *z* and then to *r*. Testimony of such alteration remains in English *was* and *were*, in Latin *pignus* and *pignora*. Now this new *r* must at the start have been untrilled; in fact, it must have been closely similar to modern English *r* in *red*, which is not far from *z*. After coming thus into existence, the novel sound was doubtless assimilated to the commoner

trilled *r*. The latter seems then to have held fairly general sway until modern times, despite some traces, both in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, of a lapse from its distinctive vibrant quality — such traces as change of *r* to *d*, reduction of *rs* to *s*, palatization of *r*, and local medieval confusion of *r* and *z*. In the sixteenth century a fashion of speaking *z* for *r* sprang up in Paris and central France: “chaize,” “mazy,” “Pazy,” as Palsgrave testified in 1530 (Jehan Palsgrave, *L'Esclaircissement de la langue françoise*, London) were used for *chaire*, *mari*, *Paris*. People said “Masia” for *Maria*, “ma mese” for *ma mère*. Conversely, some pronounced “courin,” “rairon,” “sairon” for *cousin*, *raison*, *saison*. This style seems to have died away about 1620, perhaps leaving as a permanent memento the word *chaise* beside the earlier *chaire*. Next followed the great shift from front to rear of the mouth. At the time of the *Précieuses*, in the seventeenth century, it would appear that the uvular trill came to be substituted for the lingual in Parisian choice society, whence it spread little by little through northern France and a good part of northerly Europe. In Germany it apparently turns up in the first half of the eighteenth century. At present this *r*, or its untrilled substitute, is characteristic of the urban pronunciation of the greater portion of France and Germany, being least favored in the south. It is still avoided in song and, in Germany, on the tragic stage.

To account for the passage from tongue-tip to uvula it has been suggested that in a chilly climate the growth of polished society and the development of indoor conversation may naturally have led to the adoption of less strenuous habits of speech, a more subdued tone replacing the loud voice that befits life in the open air. A softer voice means a less energetic expulsion of air from the lungs, a

smaller current of breath flowing through the vocal organs. Now, as I have said, to make the end of the tongue vibrate, a considerable body of moving air is needed, whereas a moderate outflow suffices to keep the uvula bobbing. A further reduction in the discharge of breath may have led to the omission of even this easy flap and the adoption, in its place, of a weak consonantal noise produced in the back of the mouth. How soon this last substitution occurred, we do not know. The Revolutionary dandies known as Incroyables are said to have discarded *r* from their speech; perhaps in reality they replaced it by a very feeble fricative.

Interesting it is to picture the advocates of elegance and decorum refining not only their words but their tones, modulating their voices and attuning them to their dainty concepts, cultivating an internal, secluded coo in place of the more open and vigorous roll of the outer end of the tongue. The newer sound, to be sure, fails to please the unaccustomed ear of the modern Anglo-Saxon, whose own *r* has been softened almost to the vanishing point; but with habit comes appreciation of its gentle effectiveness. Much depends on the degree of ease and delicacy with which it is brought forth. When neatly trilled, on the stage, it reveals the advantage of extreme audibility produced by a minimum of effort. In song, where a more voluminous output of air is customary, and the breath is under stricter control, the old lingual trill appears appropriate, the more so since we consciously or unconsciously associate vocal music with Italian. In speech, this tongue-roll is still widely used in rural districts and small towns, sporadically in large cities; some French actors cling to it. Many Frenchmen hear no difference, or fancy themselves to be uttering one sound when really making the other. Whether



the uvula is ultimately destined to supplant the tongue-tip altogether, it would be rash to guess.

Did the uvular fashion, in its spread over northern Europe, invade England? We have reason to believe that it did. From time to time one comes across an individual speaker who substitutes for *r* a feeble sound very similar to *w* — identical with it, in fact, save that the lips are generally parted. This habit, sporadic in America, is by no means rare in the mother country. A couple of generations ago, it was a regular feature of dandified pronunciation. Now, it is difficult to derive this substitute from any type of *r*, however vowel-like, except one made in the back of the mouth; whereas its evolution from the uvular consonant would present no difficulty. The sound is, indeed, not essentially different from the softened, untrilled variety of uvular *r* common in France and Germany. Moreover, in Northumberland the uvular trill actually exists to the present day. It is described by A. J. Ellis in his *English Dialects*. The burr is weak, he says, between vowels, as in "to marry a very merry lass," and in the ending *er*; in some places it is so reduced as to resemble *w*. I have heard it quite identical in sound with the untrilled French *r*.

Ellis's "very merry lass" is suggestive of those speakers sometimes met at home, particularly in New England and in the South, who altogether omit the *r* between vowels in many words — oftenest, perhaps, in *ve'y*. *Che'y* and *be'y* also are familiar to observers of the older generation. That was the generation which bu'ied its fust wife in '66 and ma'ied its second in '68. Some of my own family have lived in Sh'ewsbu'y. A curious borderland type is that which sounds its *r* before a consonant and suppresses it before a vowel, the inconsistent creature who is *ve'y so'y* to be late, having hu'ied so that he can't hordly breathe.



One would like to know whether this elimination of the canine letter came about, like its transformation into *w*, through a shift from the lingual to the uvular production. Here we cannot be quite sure; but in all probability no such shift is to be assumed, only a gradual fading out of an untrilled *r* of the front variety.

Normally, in our southern states, in New England, and in most of Old England, at the present time, *r* is sounded consonant-fashion only before a vowel, and then only as a feeble murmur. We say *fah*, *paht*, but *rat*, *try*, *very*. Elegant speakers in England, to be sure, are apt to give the *r* in such words as *very* — where it stands between vowels — a smart little flap, which, however, is foreign to us. Such rimes as *Maud* and *Lord*, *harm* and *balm* are called “Cockney rimes” in Great Britain, “New England rimes” in America — quite unjustly in both cases; for they represent the speech of all the areas just named. Now, the distinction made between *r* before a vowel and *r* before a consonant, as in *Mary* and *Martha*, leads to a double pronunciation of words ending in *r* — *star*, for instance. When the mustering of members in a phrase causes one of these words to march before a word beginning with a consonant, the *r* of course maintains its final silence: *starlight* is as *r*-less as *star*. But when the next follower begins with a vowel, the *r* makes itself heard, as in *star of the night*. The word *star* therefore has, in our *r*-slighting speech, two pronunciations, *stah* and *star*, according to what comes after it. So it is, potentially, with every *r*-tailed vocable. *Peppa* becomes, in proper company, *pepper* and *salt*, with as good an *r* as there is in *peppery*. Fatha's at home, but mother isn't. I remember, I rememba the house where I was bawn. Stah-light, stah bright, very fuhst star I've seen tonight. The waw, the long war is over. But that is not the end of the story.

If the vowel that precedes the *r* is one formed by lifting the tongue pretty high up, such as *ee* in the front of the mouth, or *oo* in the back, we cannot easily pass straight from this sound to an *r*, and consequently we introduce an obscure glide vowel between the two; that is, we say, if we are *r*-pronouncers, not *beer*, but *bee-ur*; not *poor*, but *poo-ur*; not *door*, but *do-ur* (that is, in America — the mother country says *daw*). Now, where and when the *r* itself becomes inaudible, its former presence, in these words, is betrayed by the lingering of this glide; only, instead of gliding to an *r*, we now glide over it. Hee-uh's to good old bee-uh; bee-ur and wine. Poo-uh man! poo-ur old man! More and mo-uh. But there is mo-uh still.

Like our simian cousins, we are creatures of imitation. Our habits are in great measure useless copies of something originally purposeful. Most of our grammar and syntax is blind imitation of things that once had a meaning. Even so it is, probably, with the changes in our vocabulary and pronunciation. Having developed an enormous number of couples such as *star* and *stah*, *pepper* and *peppa*, *war* and *waw*, we unconsciously increase the list by adding to it all the words that properly terminate in an obscure vowel or an *ah* or an *aw*. To the pair *peppa*: *pepper and salt* we assimilate *soda*: *sodar and salt*. The Shah, the Shahr of Persia, after the model of fah, far away. Raw clams, rawr oysters. Linden sawr another sight. But inasmuch as the category of the obscure vowel vastly outnumbers those of *ah* and *aw*, its attractive force is vastly superior, and the type of *sodar and salt* is correspondingly more frequent than those of *Shahr* and *sawr*. Emmar Eameses and Louisar Alcotts are not only far commoner, but more inevitable, than rawr oysters. Still, it is hard drawing the line. If I have heard Yankee schoolmistresses teaching their German

classes *ich haber es*, I have heard them also teaching their French pupils *il ar eu*. Obviously, the principle is this: *r* is a stopper, a sound inserted to prevent hiatus after the obscure vowel and, with many speakers, after *ah* and *aw*. We should use it also after the vowel of *fur*, if there were any occasion; but it so happens that all our words which contain that vowel at the close are already provided with an *r*. However, when we try to talk French, we are inclined to say *peur à peu*. On the other hand, we are never tempted to apply the stopper after the higher vowels, those which call for an audible glide: never should we say, for instance, *tee-ur* and *coffee* for *tea* and *coffee*, nor *too-ur* and *too* for *two* and *two*. That is partly because hiatus after *ee* or *oo*, if it be found objectionable, is easily and automatically stopped by the development of the end of these vowels, respectively, into *y* or *w*: if we dislike *be a sport*, *do it now*, we naturally pronounce *bee-y-a sport*, *doo-w-it now*. Another reason is that the *r*-less forms of *beer* and *poor* are *bee-uh* and *poo-uh*, not *bee* and *poo*, and therefore they do not serve as models for *be* and *do*, for *tea* and *two*. The surviving *uh* of *bee-uh*, *poo-uh* is a constant reminder that the *r* is an integral part of the word, not a mere stopper. Whereas a phrase like *better and better* is felt to be *betta-r-an betta*, the *r* belonging as much to the following as to the preceding word, the normal form of which is *betta*. The French pursue a similar course, with *t* as a stopper, when they say *aime-t-il* after the model of *vient-il*; and, in careless speech, with *z* for a hiatus-breaker, when they say *quatrez yeux*. The practice I have been describing, the use of *r* to prevent hiatus, is not common to all the regions that keep *r* only before a vowel: it is prevalent — indeed, wellnigh universal — in southern England and in New England; but it has not taken root in our own South. A few Englishmen, and per-

haps more Yankees, aware of the phenomenon, have with considerable pains rid themselves of the habit. Among these am I.

We have wandered far from the whirring tongue-point. Let us return to the history of that whirr in English. Said Ben Johnson in his *English Grammar*, printed in 1640: "R is the *Dogs* letter, and hurreth in the sound; the tongue striking the inner palate, with a trembling about the teeth. It is sounded firme in the beginning of the words, and more *liquid* in the middle, and ends: as in *rarer*, *riper*, and so in the Latine." Apparently the trill was longer and more vigorous when it was initial. So it is now in Spanish; and so it is with our modern elocutionists who trill the *r*. In 1768 Benjamin Franklin devised *A Scheme for a New Alphabet and Reformed Mode of Spelling*, in the course of which he describes the production of our consonant with "the tip of the tongue a little loose or separate from the roof of the mouth, and vibrating." Sheridan's dictionary of 1780 and Smith's *Attempt to Render the Pronunciation of the English Language easy to Foreigners*, 1795, recognize only one type of *r*, probably the tip-trill.

Similarly Noah Webster's *Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, published in Hartford, Conn. (third edition in 1784), declares that "R always has the same sound, as in *barrel*, and is never silent." Possibly I am over-suspicious, but I seem to detect in this last clause a note of protest, or at least of warning. When anyone takes the trouble to tell us that a thing is never done, we wonder why he should do so, unless the thing in question is done only too often. At any rate, in his *Dissertations on the English Language*, Boston, 1789, Webster confesses that "some of the southern people, particularly in Virginia, almost omit the sound of *r*, as in *ware*, *there*. In the best

English pronunciation the sound of *r* is much softer than in some of the neighboring languages, particularly the Irish and Spanish." But the ninth, or 1794, edition of his *American Spelling-Book* repeats the asseveration that "*r* has only one sound, as in *barrel*." The same year and the same city, Boston, witnessed the eighth edition of a work by Caleb Bingham entitled *The Young Lady's Accidence*, wherein fair readers are cautioned not to say "I cotch a werry bad cold" nor "the wessel lays at the voff." An *r*-less wharf was known, then, to eighteenth century Bostonians. My copy of *The Young Ladies' and Gentlemen's Spelling-Book* has unfortunately lost its title-page; but I conjecture that it belongs to the same time and place. This aristocratic manual contains, among pairs of words "similar in sound," *bust* and *burst*, *calk* and *cork*, *dust* and *durst*, *father* and *farther*, *just* and *first*. Benjamin Dearborn's *Columbian Grammar*, Boston, 1795, offers a list of "Improprieties," in which are registered *dazzent*, *gal*, *kose* (*coarse*), *skase* (*scarce*), all bereft of the canine letter. Yet E. Hale has the courage to assert, in his *Spelling-Book*, Northampton, 1799, that *r* "is formed by turning up and quickly vibrating the end of the tongue in the middle of the mouth." Noehden's *German Grammar*, 1800, however, admits that *r* "is deprived of much of its force and shrillness by the English mode of pronunciation," and that "in English the sound is particularly slight at the end." Jonathan Ware's *New Introduction to the English Grammar*, Windsor, Vt., 1814, presents a novel feature, to wit, a number of texts spelled phonetically according to the local pronunciation, for correction by the pupils: here figure *galz* and *konfield*. In J. A. Cummings's *Pronouncing Spelling-Book*, Boston (third edition in 1822), the "words liable to be confounded" comprise *alms* and *arms*, *balm* and *barm*, *burst* and *bust*, *calk* and *cork*,



*colonel* and *kernel*, *durst* and *dust*, *farther* and *father*, *furze* and *fuzz*, *pillow* and *pillar*. Samuel Willard, in *The General Class-Book*, Greenfield, Mass., nineteenth edition 1840, begins bravely: "*R* is never silent." But he continues thus: "In the beginning of a word, and when it comes between two vowels, as in *rag* or *very*, it has a great deal of sound; but when it comes before a consonant, as in *harm* or *bird*, it has very little sound. After several vowels, however, it is heard almost as a distinct syllable, thus *hire*, *more*, and the like are necessarily pronounced like *higher*, *mower*, while *feared*, *corn*, etc., differ little in pronunciation from *fe-ud* and *caw-un*." Elsewhere he adds: "The long common sound of *i*, *o*, and *u* is often pronounced short, so as to make *first* appear like *fust*, *worth* like *wuth*, and *burst* like *bust*. This is very improper." Says Lowell: "The genuine Yankee never gives the rough sound to *r* when he can help it, and often displays considerable ingenuity in avoiding it even before a vowel."

What is the "rough sound" of *r*? Returning to 1791, we find Walker distinguishing two kinds of *r* which he calls "rough" and "smooth." "The rough *r*," he says, "is formed by jarring the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth near the fore teeth: the smooth *r* is a vibration of the lower part of the tongue, near the root, against the inward region of the palate, near the entrance of the throat." The "rough *r*," or lingual trill, is used before vowels; the "smooth *r*," apparently a uvular trill, is used under all other conditions. "In England," however, "and particularly in London, the *r* in *lard*, *bard*, *card*, *regard*, etc., is pronounced so much in the throat as to be little more than the middle or Italian *a*, lengthened into *laad*, *baad*, *caad*, *regaad*." In 1791, then, while *r* before a vowel was still sounded as a roll of the tongue-tip, *r* before a consonant



was, according to Walker's theoretical standard, a uvular or a velar sound, and in point of fact was nearly or entirely silent in London and often elsewhere. Here we have evidence of an ancestor of the present Northumbrian burr and, in the second degree, of the modern *w*-like *r*; evidence, also, of an eighteenth century beginning of the total suppression of *r* not followed by a vowel.

Smart, whose *Grammar of English Pronunciation* appeared in London in 1810, has the same "rough *r*," but a different "smooth" one, the latter being with him wellnigh identical with our Middle Western consonant. "Smooth *r* is produced by curling back the tongue till its tip almost points toward the throat, while its sides lean against the gums of the upper side teeth and leave a passage in the middle for the voice." In the standard usage of his day, therefore, *r* is trilled only before a vowel — and not always then, for in London, he tells us, "smooth *r*" is often substituted for "rough," and a vowel sound for the "smooth." This common London practice of 1810 is essentially that of today, not only in London, but in southern England, New England, and our South. The dog's consonant, continues Smart, "is more frequently the cause of a defect in pronunciation than any other." Some persons, he says, can produce no *r*; others have a guttural burr — then evidently regarded as a provincialism; the Irish substitute the "rough" or trilled *r* for the "smooth." Some followers of Walker and Smart seem to have used the term "rough *r*" to designate a consonant *r* of any type, even quite untrilled. Thus, no doubt, it was employed by Lowell in the passage cited above.

What can we infer from all this testimony? A natural conclusion would seem to be that the thirty years from 1790 to 1820 saw most of the development from a univer-

sally trilled *r* to the modern usage of southern England, southern United States, and New England. Scotland and Ireland kept the old trill; northern England, less conservative than these countries but less radical than the south, preserved under all conditions either an untrilled consonant or a burr; our middle Atlantic states retained or restored under all circumstances the unvibrated consonant, which, in an exaggerated form, spread over the Middle West. A conservative or reactionary influence in America was probably exercised by some of the Scotch settlements. The decline of *r* apparently began in London; it spread very rapidly in England and presently in our country. In the American regions affected by the anti-*r* movement, the fashion grew until it reached in the forties, fifties, and sixties a degree unknown across the Atlantic, threatening to destroy the consonant even when a vowel followed. This extreme tendency has been checked; moreover, schools and travel have in some measure leveled other sectional differences, but East is still East and West is West. As far as we have any common standard, it is that of the high-comedy stage, which is based on the usage of southern England.

In some words the decline of *r* began long before 1790. *Harsh*, *marsh* lost their *r*, in some localities, a good many centuries ago. In 1718 an authority named Arnold observes that *r* is silent in *partridge*, *scarce*, and three other words. A certain König in 1748 notes *r*-lessness in four words, among which are *horse* and *partridge*. In all of these words except the last (which, with its two *r*'s, is an especially easy victim), it is to be observed that *r* was followed by an *s* or an *sh*. By a curious coincidence, the Latin language betrays a similar instability of *r* before *s*: *sursum*, for example, was pronounced *susum*; *dorsum* turned

to *dossum*; *persica* became *pessica*, whence Italian *pesca*, French *pesche* and *pèche*, and ultimately our *peach*. Furthermore, the vulgar pronunciation of our above-mentioned English words is not *hahsh*, *mahsh*, *scahs*, *pahtridge*, *haws*, but *hash*, *mash*, *scass*, *pattridge*, *hoss*, with a short vowel. What does this indicate? It means that the *r* disappeared before the period when *r* regularly affected the sound of the preceding vowel, lengthening and broadening *a* to *ah* and *o* to *aw*; short *u* was similarly lengthened. The most important stage of these changes came in the latter eighteenth century. The words in question, losing their *r* before that time, preserved their earlier vowel. It follows that a word whose vulgar pronunciation not only is *r*-less, but shows the short instead of the long vowel, presumably lost its *r* before the general *r*-discarding fashion set in: such words are *dass* for *dar'st*, *bust* for *burst*, *cuss*, *fust*, *nuss*, *puss* for *purse*, *wuss* — all of them containing after the *r* the destructive *s*. *Wulh* has instead of *s* the kindred *th*. *Gal* seems to stand apart.

Let us consider for a moment the influence of an *r* on the vowel that goes before it. The type of *r* that we must keep in mind is a trill of the tongue's end, the whole organ, more or less wedge-shaped, being tilted diagonally up towards the gums, to which its thin edge is loosely applied. To make a transition to this posture from that of the obscure vowel, or the first vowel of *colonel*, or the "Italian *a*," is very easy, as it involves little more than lifting up the front rim; such combinations as we find in *baker*, *fur*, *far* present small difficulty to anyone who has the trilling habit. On the other hand, if the tongue has been bunched together in the back of the mouth, as in the formation of *oo* or *o*, or in the front of the mouth, as for *ee* or *ai*, the passage to *r* is complex and difficult, especially in the latter case. *Poor* is hard

to trill; *peer* and *pair* are still harder. We have already observed the introduction of an obscure glide vowel in such groups, a pronunciation *poo-ur*, *pee-ur*. Another and a more radical means of relief consists in altering the main vowel itself, flattening the tongue toward the shape required for *ah*. Thus, in French, the Latin *perfectum*, *mercantem* become *parfait*, *marchand*; and in English we have *clerk* and *Clark*, *merchant* and *Marchant*, *Derby* and *Darby*, *sergeant* and *Sargent*, *person* and *parson*, *mercy* and *Marcy*. At the present day, nearly all the English-speaking world has relaxed the utterance of vowels before *r*, no matter how greatly this consonant may have lost its asperity. We pronounce *poor* with the vowel of *put*, not with that of *boot*; *beer* with the vowel of *bit*, not with that of *beet*; *pair* with the vowel of *pet* or *pat*, not with that of *pain*. Often the sound has descended still lower in the scale. *Poor* in our South is reduced to *po*. When *oo* is preceded by a *y*, it is apt to drop to *o* and then to *aw*: *your* becomes *yore*, then *yawr* and *yaw*; *pure*, in England, is often *pyaw*, *obscure* is sounded *obskeyaw*, *furious* is *fyawrious*. The reason for this is that *y* demands a bunching of the tongue in the front of the mouth, *oo* a bunching in the rear, *r* a slant to the front; and the rapid sequence of these three positions taxes too severely our indifferent linguistic agility. *Sure*, which used to begin with *sy* instead of *sh*, is frequently pronounced *shore* (*sho* in our southern states), *shawr*, or *shaw*. When the *oo* between *y* and *r* is unaccented, we reduce it to the obscure vowel. After having coquetted for a century or so with *natoor* or *nater*, *nattooral* or *natteral*, usage has settled down to *nacher*, *nacheral*, *pikcher*, *capcher*, and the like, with or without the final *r*. The pedantic *piktyoor* has no warrant in the usage of good society, in the practice of the stage, nor in the history of the language.

Now let us look at some of the principal changes effected by a following *r* in the eighteenth century. Perhaps the most important is that which concerns *a*. During most of the eighteenth century, except perhaps for a few foreign words, there was no sound *ah* in standard English. The earlier *ah* had become *ă*, the vowel of *man*. Franklin, in 1768, makes no mention of *ah*, nor does Sheridan, in 1780. Not until 1784 do we find a vowel which may be approximately an "Italian *a*," in Nares's *Elements of Orthoepey*, London; it occurs before *f*, *s*, *th*, before *lm*, before *n* followed by another consonant, even in *trans-* and in *-graph*, but, it would seem, not yet before *r*, inasmuch as Nares assigns to *clerk* and *sergeant* the vowel *ă*. Walker, in 1791, is the first to record a return of the full *ah*. He reports *ah* as employed universally before an *r* that is final or followed by a consonant, as in *car*, *cart*, but not in *carry*. Usage was in his time divided when the next consonant was not an *r* but a spirant, as in *half*, *pass*, *path*. Before *n* with a consonant after it, *ah*, according to Walker, was going out of use, being regarded as inelegant: that is, fashion was turning from *dahnce*, *cahn't* to *dănce*, *căn't*. We seem to find, then, between 1780 and 1790 a sudden incursion of *ah* — which may have existed considerably earlier in vulgar practice — into polite London society. As far as the *car*, *cart* words were concerned, it had come to stay; but with regard to the *half*, *pass*, *path* category, and still more to that of *can't* and *dance*, there is still bitter strife. In all the classes, for many years after Walker, *ah* and *ă* struggled for the supremacy. German grammars written in English early in the nineteenth century give as the equivalent of German *a* sometimes English *aw*, sometimes a sound between the vowel of *law* and that of *father*. England appears to have beaten America, in this development, by a



decade or more. The earliest American mention of "Italian *a*" that I have found is in 1806 by Webster, who assigns it to such words as *ask*, *dance*, *demand*, *father*, *psalm*; before *r*, no doubt, he took it for granted. Having once established itself, *ah* was particularly favored in New England and a part of Virginia. In the former region, between 1830 and 1850, it may be said to have raged, infecting such words as *adder*, *apple*, *caterpillar*, *hammer*, *handsome*, *ladder*, *matter*, *pantry*, *practical*, *satisfactory*, *Saturday*, *shadow*, *sparrow*.

Next in importance is the alteration of the vowel in such cases as *bird*, *fir*, *her*, *herb*, *earn*, *pearl*, *world*, *word*, *curl*, *fur*. In all these words the *i*, the *e* (or *ea*), the *o*, and the *u* are now pronounced alike; but they were all different at the start, and their course is far from clear, involved as it is in many eddies of local and transient fashion. By the middle of the century the vowel of *sun* had doubtless changed from the *oo* of *soon*, pronounced short, to its present value; in fact, we have evidence that as early as 1643 *sun* and *son* were alike (Richard Hodges, *A Special help to orthographie*, London, 1643). Before *r*, both *u* and *o* — as in *curl*, *word* — seem to have been spoken as we speak the *u* of *hut*; this is still the practice of the Irish. We have, then, by 1750, an established pronunciation of *ur* and *or* as they are now generally heard in *hurry* and *worry*. Long before this time *ir* had coincided with *er* in a pronunciation which varied between the present *e* of *merry* and the present *i* of *mirth*. In 1653 Wallis describes the stressed *e* of English "vertue" as like French "*e* feminine." Sterpin, a Frenchman living in Denmark, identified English *ir* with Danish *ør*, in a work published about 1665 or 1670. In 1678 a Norwegian named Bolling declared in his English grammar that English *first*, *thirst* have Danish *ø*, while *church*, *nurse* have *u*. Cooper, in



1685, makes *er* like *ur*, and both of them like *ir* in *bird*. An *Essai Raisonné sur la Grammaire et la Prononciation Angloise, a l'usage des François qui desirent d'apprendre l'Anglois* par Duncan Mackintosh et ses deux filles, Boston, 1797, regards the vowel of *cur*, *fir*, *her* and that of *but*, *under* as identical with the French *e* of *je*. Yet even to the present day some elocutionists insist on giving to *ir*, *er*, *ear*, as in *birth*, *her*, *pearl*, the sound of *e* in *merry*.

In the middle of the eighteenth century we have, before an *r* that is final or followed by a consonant, a tendency toward the *fur* sound in two categories of words: one category comprises the words containing *u* or *o*, then pronounced *ũ* as in *hut*; the other contains the words with *i* or *e* (or *ea*), then pronounced sometimes *ě* as in *pet*, sometimes *ĕ* as in *pert*. Between these two categories there was much confusion, many words changing their sound from *e* to *u*. Shifts from *e* to *ĕ* must have been still more frequent. Sheridan, 1780, tells us to say *e* in *firm*, *herb*, *pearl*, *stern*, but *u* in *fir*, *first*, *her*, *stir*. Webster, 1784, advocates "short *e*, nearly" in *birth*, *firm*, *earth*, *person*, "short *u*" in *fir*, *bird*, *her*. Donald Fraser, in 1794 (*The Columbian Monitor*, New York) would have us pronounce *i* (?) in *mirth*, *girdle*, *squirrel*, etc., but *u* in *first*, *thirst*, *fir*, *sir*, *thirty*, *dirt*, *flirt*, *bird*, *third*, *birch*, *thirteen*, *shirt*, *mirth* (!), *stirrup*. It is likely that authorities often failed to mention *ĕ* simply because they did not know how to describe it. Smart, in 1810, evidently recognized it, but did not contribute much to its general recognition. Not before Worcester, 1830, do I find *ĕ* installed in the system of English pronunciation as a vowel distinct from all others and as the regular sound of *er*, *ir*, and *ur*, final or before a consonant. Among the German grammars, Follen, 1831, says that German *ö* has "no correspondent sound in English"; but Fosdick, 1838, pronounces *ö* "nearly as

the English *u* in *fur*”; while Ollendorff, 1839, defines it as English *i* in *bird*. Says Monteith, in 1844, “*Ö* is pronounced like the French *eu*. The inflection given by a native of London to *ir*, in such words as *birth*, *mirth*, is a still more correct pronunciation of the *ö*.” The most surprising feature of this statement is the implication that *ë* could seem a distinctively Cockney sound to a New Englander in 1844. By 1830 the present standard pronunciation of all these words must have been pretty well established. One can now distinguish three local shades of variance, the common American, the southern American, and the English; but the differences are slight.

Startlingly different, on the other hand, is the New York City substitute for *er* — namely, a combination of some kind of *ë* with an *ee* that is made abnormally far back in the mouth. The earliest mention of this pronunciation that I have discovered occurs in Oliver Wendell Holmes’s *Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, 1859: there the New York rendering of *first* is analyzed as “*fe-eest*,” the *fe* having the vowel of French *le*. For lack of an adequate symbol, dialect writers represent it as “foist”; and people who know it only through print so pronounce it, just as non-Yankee actors, unfamiliar with the Yankee short *o*, say *hull* for *whole* and *but* for *boat* and *stun* for *stone*, in New England rural plays. Although this odd distortion of *er*, in such words as *girl*, *berth*, *earn*, *worst*, *curl*, is most marked in New York City, it was formerly, in a milder variety, extremely prevalent in Philadelphia, and may still be heard from elderly Philadelphians. It is common, too, in the Carolinas, and is found sporadically elsewhere. For some reason, it has an irresistible attraction for German and Hebrew learners of our language. How it originated, I cannot tell.

Another American dialect peculiarity extends over the

whole region of the curled-back *r*. I have already stated that this consonant invades the preceding vowel and imparts to it a strange, stuffy quality. If the vowel in question is in present standard English a short *e*, the pervasive *r* may transform it into an *ũ*, changing *American* to "Amurrican." When I was a boy, I used to hear English people say that an American could always be detected by his pronunciation of *very*. Never could I imagine what they meant, until for the first time I happened to hear a Middle Westerner's "vurry." "Sturru" and "surru" represent a much older shift; and "squurrel" must be of long standing in America.

Before taking leave of the "hurring" letter, let us recall that it may not only affect the sound of a vowel, but take the place of one; that is, it may be used syllabically. When we say *blackberry*, we may utter it at full length, just as it is spelled. On the other hand, we may reduce it to two syllables, saying "blackbry." I remember hearing a clubhouse lecture by a British officer who invariably made but two syllables of *military*. But we may steer a middle course, allowing our *blackberry* its full portion of syllables, while suppressing the *e*; then we get "blackb-r-ry." So "Roxb-r-ry." "Duxb-r-ry." If we are good *r*-ists, we may even get in *Canterbury* two syllabic *r*'s. Similarly a faithful *r*-devotee easily gets a syllabic *r* in "giv-r," "ov-r," "und-r," "sail-r." Now this same use of *r* is mentioned by John Hart in 1570, with *givr* and *undr* among the examples. As Cooper, in 1685, assures us that final *r* was trilled, we can imagine what Hart's *givr* sounded like: something not at all similar to the "givr" of our Middle West, with its choked and vibrationless end-syllable. For the faithless, this final syllable is of course nothing but the obscure vowel, and "giva," "ova," "unda," "saila" close

exactly like *Anna, Clara, Emma, Ida, Louisa, soda, sofa* — save that in some rural dialects the latter change their terminal vowel to *y*, becoming “sody,” “sofy,” and so on.

Such, in brief, is the history of the canine letter. Born under the most favorable auspices, sturdiest of the consonants, it has partaken of the softening effects of civilization. On European soil only the outskirts — Scotland, Ireland, Spain, Italy — have preserved nearly intact its pristine strength. Elsewhere it has weakened and declined, now transformed to an internal burr, now sunk to a feeble untrilled fricative, now become a mere colorless vowel. In song it still lingers, and to some extent in declamation. America has, in the main, followed about the same paths as the parent lands; but our enterprising Middle West, unwilling to abandon the *r* tradition, has developed and cherished an *r*-substitute, homely, to be sure, but vigorous and aggressive. What has the future in store? Will decay pursue its course; or will a reaction set in, restoring to the English-speaking world a real *r* of some kind, or a tolerable substitute? Will there be an interchange between the populations that trill with the tongue, those that trill with the uvula, and those that trill not at all; or will each continue to turn a hostile ear to the linguistic products of the other? With these questions I have naught to do. It is hard enough for an historian to tell the truth when he confines his statements to the past.

## IV

### NUMERIC REFORM IN NESCIIOUBIA<sup>1</sup>

THE partisans of an arduous and unpopular movement ought to be interested, even if they cannot be cheered, by an account of a bold attempt at betterment in a different but similar field in a distant country. Of course you all know as well as I do where Nescioubia is; and it is doubtless unnecessary for me to remind you that the Nescioubians, while they have long enjoyed the advantages of a rational orthography, have retained to our day the practice of computing solely with Roman numerals.

It seems almost incredible that a people should have simplified either its spelling or its numbers without having sense enough to reform the other; but such is unhappily the case. A few years ago this inconsistency became apparent to some thoughtful Nescioubians; and, after much private deliberation, they began openly to discuss the possibility of substituting for their cumbrous notation the Arabic figures long since adopted by other nations. As the American papers have furnished but scanty information on the subject, I venture to present to you such authentic facts as I have been able to gather concerning the crusade that followed.

The would-be innovators brought forward, it would appear, several fairly cogent arguments. Firstly, they said, the teaching of mathematics is so impeded by the use of

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered before the Simplified Spelling Board in New York, on April 7, 1914.



Roman symbols, especially in long division, that Nescioubian children are fully two years behind the youth of other lands, spending as they do upon the mastery of needless mechanical difficulties the precious moments that might better be devoted to things of intrinsic worth. The vast majority of them, in fact, never learn to reckon at all, and simply put down as their result any alphabetical combinations that association may suggest, blindly hoping that the outcome may not be too wide of the mark. They have indeed almost lost the sense of number. Besides, they are so generally dispirited by their futile efforts that they lack the courage to attack their other studies with the vigor requisite to success.

Secondly, an incalculable amount of time, patience, and energy is wasted by the Nescioubian all through life in dealing with irrationally complicated sequences of signs.

Thirdly, the commerce of Nescioubia and her national influence (which might be so beneficial to the world) are suffering from the inability of Nescioubians to count as other people do. Even professional mathematicians are seldom quite sure of their results. A curious vagueness and uncertainty have come to pervade all Nescioubian thought. The Arabic notation, they urged, is so simple and logical that it can be learned in a few hours and can be written without continual reference to a table. Why, then, should we not adopt it?

You would scarcely believe what a storm of protest was aroused by this seemingly commendable proposal. Bitterest among the opponents were the journalists (or, as they are called in that country, the Osteocephali), and particularly those who had never been able to count with accuracy beyond thirteen. "Underminers of our civilization," "destroyers of Nescioubian mathematics," "grotesque



iconoclasts " — these are a few of the epithets hurled by Osteocephalia at the startled reformers. Arguments seemed unnecessary — the Arabic numbers were so funny! When, however, the " grotesque iconoclasts " picked up courage to ask for reasons, the Osteocephali responded with one voice:

" The arithmetic of Romulus and Julius Caesar is good enough for me! "

" But," said the reformers timidly, " Romulus and Caesar calculated somewhat differently. Which style do you advocate ? "

" The arithmetic of Romulus and Julius Caesar is good enough for me !"

" Allow us to point out," insisted the iconoclasts, " that your use of numbers is not exactly that favored by Caesar. For instance, on your library, erected in 1900, you have inscribed MCM, which, on a public monument, would not have approved itself to Caesar's contemporaries."

" The arithmetic of Romulus and Julius Caesar is good enough for me! "

It became evident that the Osteocephali were like those talking dolls which, no matter how hard they may be pressed, can say only " Mama! "

Disappointed though they were, the reformers continued their propaganda, and now and then made a convert. A good many mathematicians admitted, in theory, the superiority of the Arabic system, but denied the possibility of its application to Nescioubian problems. Others, more independent, thought the change might very conceivably be advantageous, but declared that it should come about spontaneously, without concerted pressure from any self-constituted body. The Arabic numbers, apparently, were to fold their tents and silently steal in without anybody noticing them.

Others still conceded that the substitution might perhaps be assisted by conscious effort on somebody's part (not their own), but stoutly maintained that it should be effected, if at all, very gradually, by the adoption, let us say, of one Arabic figure in a generation. The number nine, they thought, might be a good one to begin with, as it is written in two ways, IX and VIIII, neither of them wholly convenient in complex practical computation.

Not all the mathematicians, however, were so revolutionary. Some of those who adorned the higher walks of the profession were convinced that the introduction of Arabic signs would destroy at one blow the philosophic spirit of their science. How, they asked, could one speculate on the fourth dimension unless four were written IV? What impression would their beautifully elaborated deductions make, if they were associated in the student's mind with a horrid Arabic 4?

The conciliatory mood exhibited by a few influential scientists began to alarm the conservatives, especially the manufacturers of those ponderous tomes of numerical reference tables which the Roman notation renders indispensable. In self-defense they enlisted the services of an eminent pedagogue, who proved, by a series of psychological experiments, that children can perform long division more rapidly, more correctly, and with less mental strain, by the use of the Roman numbers than by the use of the Arabic.

The Osteocephali were triumphant. Vainly did the innovators urge that the psychological experimenters in charge of the laboratories had possessed but a misty idea of the values of the new signs, being generally under the impression, for example, that the figure 7 represented sixteen. Such details were deemed irrelevant. It should be ex-

plained that in Nescioubia the exponents of Psychology (and, above all, Experimental Psychology) are looked upon as the recipients of divine inspiration. To doubt one of their utterances on any subject is sacrilegious — and dangerous, too, since the occult powers bestowed on the Psychologist may, in popular belief, be used for destruction as well as for enlightenment.

Despite such crushing rebuffs, the cause of reform slowly went on gaining adherents — most of them, to be sure, of the acquiescent rather than the militant type. But at this point a new obstacle arose. “The advent of Arabic numbers,” declared the Osteocephali, “would ruin the continuity of mathematical thought.” This argument made a profound impression on the non-mathematical public. “If,” continued the newspaper scientists, “we should write four with a single Arabic figure, we should lose sight of the fact that four presented itself to the Roman consciousness as five minus one, and we should thus cut ourselves off from all contact with our ancestors.”

“But the Romans were not the ancestors of most of us,” objected the reformers.

“That makes no difference. They were somebody’s ancestors. Besides, they were our predecessors, anyhow; and they invented our numbers. How are we to think consistently if we throw away the reminder that for them four was not four, but five minus one?”

“In any event,” answered the radicals, “the Roman numerals would not perish from the face of the earth; and the knowledge that four is five minus one would still be accessible to persons desirous of that information.”

“Ah! but our youth would lack, at the most impressionable age, the ever present and suggestive record of the Roman conception of four.”

“But,” urged the innovators, so far recovering from their consternation as to be able to collect some of their wits, “the Romans did not conceive of four as five minus one. When they wanted to express it properly, they wrote IIII; and they regarded IV as a handy but rather undignified abbreviation.”

“The advent of Arabic numbers,” replied the Ostecephali, “would ruin the continuity of mathematical thought.”

On this point it was generally granted that the Ostecephali had scored a victory. Following up their advantage, they proceeded to display the ridiculousness of the new mathematics. The papers, from time to time, published numbers written and sums done (incorrectly of course) in Arabic style; and that part of the public which could read neither notation roared with laughter.

“How,” it was asked, “could a schoolboy be expected to keep a straight face when he encountered eighty-eight disguised as two doughnuts, instead of seeing it in its simple and natural representation, LXXXVIII? How could any one of us preserve his respect for the Number of the Beast” — which is held sacred by the Nescioubians — “if he saw it appear, not in its ancient, venerable, and perspicuous image of DCLXVI, but transformed into three wriggling polliwogs?”

“You should not balk at the strangeness of our system,” faltered the dismayed reformers. “Everything new is strange. You should consider its simplicity.”

“Simplicity!” sneered the conservatives. “Have you the face to call it simple, when it employs more signs than the old one? For the numbers up to and including one hundred, your method requires ten different symbols, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; ours, only five, I, V, X, L, C. The

Roman notation is, then, just twice as simple as the Arabic, as far as these numbers are concerned. When it comes to the smaller numbers, those under fifty, which one oftenest meets, the superiority of the old way is still greater; we use three signs, you still need ten — we are therefore three and a third times as simple as you.”

The reformers were discouraged, and no wonder. Friends of the movement began to suggest compromises. “Let us keep the Roman signs, to which the people are so passionately attached,” they counseled; “but let us use them with Arabian directness.” This proposition met with considerable approval. When, however, the question arose, how Arabian directness was to be infused into the Roman numerals, there were more minds than men.

One enthusiast, profoundly moved by the simplicity argument of the Osteocephali, expressed his conviction that only one symbol should be employed, preferably the letter I, which should be repeated as many times as the number to be written exceeded unity; thus, he declared, would be attained the maximum of practicable simplification; although in the abstract (he reluctantly admitted) a still higher degree of simplicity might be reached by using no symbol at all.

Another philosopher discovered that, inasmuch as the real basis of Roman counting is duplication, systematic perfection is to be won only by carrying out that principle consistently: for instance, to express two we double one, to express twenty we double ten, and so forth; we ought therefore to write eight IVIV, eighteen IXIX, thirty-four XVIIXVII. Against him arose a third, affirming that the foundation of Romanism, as we now practise it, is not addition, but subtraction; hence we should write six, for example, not VI but IVX.

A middle course between these two extremes was advocated by a Radical-Conservative member. "We must distinguish," he said, "between long and short numbers. Then we can express long numbers by subtraction, short numbers by addition. Eight, which is short, we may continue to write VIII; but eighty-eight, which is long, we shall write XIIC."

When asked where he would draw the line between short and long, he replied that, being a strictly practical man, he left these details to the mathematical theorists.

Such was the situation last winter. Because of recent storms, I have been for several weeks without news from Nescioubia. According to the latest advices, the reformers were full of good hope. But the Nesciubians were still using the Roman numerals.



## V

# IS MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING A FAILURE?<sup>1</sup>

WE traffickers in living tongues are admirable exponents of that attitude of mind which some sociologists call "the noble discontent." Discontented we all are; if not with our own ministrations, at least with the efforts of our fellows, and especially with the operations of those instructors who immediately precede us. If we be high school teachers, let us recall what we said, at the beginning of the year, about the modest attempts made to impart a little German to our pupils in the grammar school: did we not express a preference for children who had not tried to study a foreign language in the grades at all, devoutly wishing that our charges had spent their extra time on English grammar? What does the college instructor remark, when he first sizes up the hopeful product that comes to him from the high school? Does he not invariably declare that the years spent on French in the preparatory school have been worse than wasted, and that his best students are those who never opened a French book before? As to the observations of collaborators in the same institution, each on the pedagogical ability of his colleague in the next grade below, they are better forgotten than remembered. And the saddest part of it is — making allowance for the exaggeration

<sup>1</sup> An address before the Joint Session of the Classical and Modern Language Conferences of the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club at Ann Arbor, Mich., March 28, 1907 — thirteen years ago.

due to recurrent disappointment and discouragement — allowing, too, for the different standards of successive teachers, each of whom has his peculiar antipathies among the countless possible kinds of failure — the saddest part of it is that these uncomplimentary estimates are, for the most part, substantially correct. The amount of positive, accurate knowledge carried from one grade to another seems, in proportion to the quantity of ignorance and misapprehension, insignificant.

But, it may be urged, all this is true of other subjects as well. The teachers of English composition, history, music, drawing make the same lament; and the only reason why anatomy, hygiene, physiography, meteorology, astronomy, botany, and zoölogy do not give rise to a like complaint is that these topics are disposed of in a single year. Both foreign and domestic critics affirm that the American school-boy shows a general deficiency of from three to five years, as compared with the French or German child of the same age. Are not his shortcomings in modern languages merely one manifestation of a national incompetency in matters of education ?

True it undoubtedly is that our boys and girls are, on the average, some four years behind those of France and Germany in common book-learning. We shall perhaps be able to pursue our subject with a clearer understanding if we turn aside for a moment to consider the origin of this backwardness. The blame has sometimes been put, and with some justice, upon our migratory habits and upon the heterogeneous character of our population. But there are other and more fundamental causes: three, especially, call for more extended examination.

The most obvious source of the transatlantic superiority is the Spartan discipline maintained in the foreign schools,

a discipline which forces pupils through a curriculum so crowded that neither American scholars nor American parents would submit to it for a year. The school child in Europe is in a state of bondage: from the age of six to eighteen he scarcely knows any occupation but study; his whole life centers in school, while, as we all know, for the American youth of that age school is merely one element in a highly variegated existence. No doubt we might advantageously imitate our neighbors by insisting on more expert school management, by strengthening somewhat our grip upon our students, and above all by making the award of diplomas depend in some degree on the successful performance of school duties. In a community where public instruction is directed by a committee chosen by parents, who in turn are controlled by their children, we have a kind of indirect educational self-government which makes strict standards impossible. Fortunately there are some American cities to which this criticism no longer applies; but those towns are few indeed in which the general administration is in the hands of the really competent. If, however, it came to an absolute choice between our happy-go-lucky method — with the abundant opportunity it affords our children for wholesome exercise, play, spontaneity, and varied experience — and the scholastic sweat-shop of some Europeans — with its renunciation of so much that makes childhood worth living — we might still prefer our backwardness to a proficiency bought at such a price.

Another reason for the quicker progress of the foreign pupil is the greater inducement offered him to study. There is no doubt that our children are as intelligent as those of other nations. In organizing a concert, a dramatic performance, a magazine — in fact, in any task that does not fall within the scope of school routine, the young American

is the equal of any boy on earth; in resourcefulness and enterprise it would be hard to match him. Only when he turns to prescribed study does he show himself a drone. And why? Because he sees nothing to be gained by application. Under our ordinary administration nothing but death can prevent him from getting his diploma; and the promises of the joy of superior enlightenment, of enhanced civic usefulness, of higher social prestige are to him not only vague and unsubstantial, but contrary to everyday experience. Who are the men that tower above their fellows in the columns of the newspapers? They are for the most part the untutored geniuses whose education went little if at all beyond the red schoolhouse. All the talk about the advantages of learning is, like the stories of storks and Santa Claus, only a part of the well-meaning fiction with which grown-up folks try to blind their offspring to the realities of life. Our boy good-naturedly studies a little, to oblige his parents and teachers; but as to really exerting himself, he very seldom thinks that worth while. Not so the schoolboy in the crowded Old World. He knows only too well the value of scholarship; he foresees the cruel competition, the fierce struggle for existence, that await him; and he has reason to strain every nerve to attain that degree of proficiency which may assure him a modest livelihood in the career that fate has marked out for him. As America fills up, as the opportunities for money-making without capital decrease, as the requirements in the performance of all labor advance, the value, the necessity of special training and of general discipline will become more and more apparent; and some day the American boy's outlook upon the future may be as clear and calculating as that of his European brother. May that day be slow to come!

The third and least important cause, which is a direct outcome of the pitiless competition just mentioned, is the better equipment of the teacher in France and Germany. The qualifications demanded of this unfortunate being would be likely to debar 99 per cent of the secondary school instructors in America. But are all these requirements really conducive to the welfare of the pupils? No, in large measure their only effect is to reduce the host of candidates. A long training in Romance philology, with original investigation of some topic in Old French or Provençal, does not perceptibly increase the efficiency of a teacher of elementary French, nor is it necessary even for an adequate presentation of modern French literature. On the other hand, the absolute requirement of a thorough practical knowledge — obtained in part by at least a year's residence abroad — of the language to be taught is one that we shall do well gradually to adopt. There is nothing more essential to the teacher than the confidence that springs from complete mastery of his subject. When his chief preoccupation in the classroom is not to impart what he knows, but to conceal what he does not know, the value of his labor is questionable. A very gratifying improvement in this respect has occurred in American schools in the last quarter of a century; in another twenty-five years, at the same rate of progress, the standard for high school teachers of foreign languages in our principal cities will not be inferior, in the really important things, to that maintained in France and Germany. And this increased equipment need not be accompanied by any diminution of human sympathy.

In addition to these three very patent reasons for the comparatively slow advance of our children, there is a fourth which has not been set forth until recently, and even now does not receive the consideration it deserves. The diffi-



culties of English spelling are in themselves enough to account for the whole deficiency under discussion. They have been, during the past year or two, so often and so well set before the public that there is no need of expatiating on the subject now. There seems to be no doubt that our children spend two or three years in learning — or rather in trying to learn — to spell. For French and especially for German children this process is much easier, owing to the more logical character of the orthography; in actual time spent, it is safe to assume that English and American pupils labor under a handicap of at least a year. But there is a disadvantage worse even than the loss of time — a drawback so serious as to impair the efficiency of all school work. It has been admirably stated by an Associate City Superintendent of Schools in New York:

Next to learning by imitation, the child must be taught to learn by association and analogy. He develops strength of mind by the exercise of judgment. He must reason from known facts in the solution of his little problems. If he comes to a new printed word and halts, the teacher asks him to think of the oral word for which it stands. Having learned that *puff* and *muff* stand for well-known oral words, he is staggered at *rough* and *enough*, frequently used in conversation. Having learned that these characters stand for well-known spoken words which he wrote *ruff* and *enuff* from his knowledge of *puff* and *muff*, he is again confused when the teacher tells him that *dough* is the spelling of the well-known word his mother uses when speaking about bread-making, and that *cough* stands for the malady so prevalent in the nursery during winter time.

The stage of the child's tuition during which all the similar incongruities of our spelling must be mastered, occupies many years of school life, and the process has well-nigh produced a disbelief in reason as a means of learning, and a total lack of confidence in inference. The result of falling into absurd and ridiculous situations through the exercise of his judgment, appears in a hesitancy or fear of drawing any inferences upon data relating to other fields of knowledge. The child has lost faith in his own conclusions with respect to problems in arithmetic, biology, geography, history, etc. To what extent of



subject-matter and time the school child has suffered irreparable loss, by failure to acquire confidence in the exercise of his judgment as a result of his early stultification during the process of learning to master the spelling of common words, may never be determined.

When we consider these four drawbacks — the lack of sufficient authority and competence on the part of the school management, the absence of any strong incentive to study, the inadequate training of teachers, and the stultifying effect of our eccentric spelling — far from wondering at the backwardness of our boys and girls, we may feel a justifiable pride that they are no farther behind, and we may conclude that both they and their instructors must be made of superior stuff to achieve anything at all. It is therefore apparent that a comparison of the results obtained in any one field of knowledge in our country should not, in fairness, be made with the work done in that same line abroad, but rather with the product in other branches at home; and a just estimate of the value of our modern language teaching can be reached only by setting it beside the instruction given in other departments here in America.

Such a comparison can never be made with objective exactness: it must express itself in terms of individual opinion based on observation. And inasmuch as one's judgment derives its value largely from the scope of the investigation on which it is founded, it may not be inexpedient to set forth the personal views of one who has had opportunities to study the question from the standpoint of a college instructor in elementary French and German, from the comprehensive experience of a director of all the modern language instruction in the public schools of a large city, and finally in the capacity of chairman of the Romance department in a great university. In school and

college alike one significant fact constantly obtrudes itself — namely, that the previously mentioned denial of the worth of all foregoing instruction in a subject, constantly on the lips of modern language teachers, is seldom or never heard from the mouth of an instructor in classics or mathematics. In these older topics one often hears, to be sure, complaint and impatient criticism; but only in very exceptional cases does the work done under a predecessor appear wholly fruitless. The steps may be slow, but they are sure; at each promotion the scholar has added a definite acquisition to his sum of knowledge. In the other new subjects, however — such as “science,” history, and English composition — the efforts seem, judging from such comments as one may gather in the course of years, to be fully as futile as in French and German. An eminent professor in a scientific school has been heard to declare that he would rather have, as advanced students of applied science, men who had devoted themselves to Latin than those who had spent their time on scientific studies; and his voice is one of many. College instructors in English composition are sometimes heard to regret that their pupils ever tried to write English at school. It appears to be the unanimous opinion of college professors of modern languages that their best pupils are those whose school years were given mostly to Greek and Latin, while their poorest are those in whose previous curriculum French or German or “science” was the principal factor. On the other hand, the boy from a good classical school finds that his college Latin, Greek, and mathematics are the natural continuation of what he has already acquired; and his instructor, with no great upsetting or reviewing, simply takes him on from the point he has reached under the guidance of his former teacher.

It would seem, then, if our data and inferences are correct, that Latin, Greek, and mathematics are so taught as to allow but little waste in the passage from one teacher to another, while in other subjects the apparent or real loss is most discouraging. Furthermore, school study of the classics furnishes not only an excellent basis for further work along the same line, but also the best foundation for studies of a different character; while modern language courses, in common with "science" and some other topics, far from fitting a pupil to take up new branches of study, do not adequately prepare him to continue what he has begun. It is likely enough that French and German, as taught today, are more effective than most of the other new studies, but they are still vastly inferior to the classics. And inasmuch as the modern tongues to a considerable extent have replaced Greek and Latin in the secondary school curriculum and in the ordinary college training, we cannot regard any instruction in them as satisfactory which does not produce results comparable to those derived from the study of the old humanities.

Is the inferiority of the modern to the ancient languages, as a means of mental discipline, inherent in these tongues, or does it arise from causes that can be overcome? *A priori* it is not obvious why German, for instance, should not furnish nearly as good an instrument for training the attention, the reason, and the memory, as Latin. Moreover, long-continued search does reveal some exceptional instances in which French and German have in fact been made to bear most gratifying fruit. For it must be understood that in all that has preceded we have been considering the general average, and not the unusual specific case. Until we have, then, conclusive evidence to the contrary, we may proceed on the assumption that the modern lan-

guages can be used to good purpose in education. What we need to do first of all is to discover the obstacles that have hitherto prevented success.

From time immemorial until our own generation the fundamental discipline of educated men throughout the civilized world has been derived from Latin and Greek, with more or less admixture of mathematics. The great writers, the imposing figures in history, the mighty scholars of every type have formed their intelligence on the classics; all that we revere in the intellectual past derives from that abundant source. The majestic tradition of classic study gives to the old humanities a dignity that newer branches of learning can never attain, unless it be after many centuries of like achievement. In the far-distant future we may picture a time when French and German will be invested with the glory of ancient and perennial success; but that thought affords us no present help, save the gift of an ideal toward which our efforts may converge, a faith that may brighten the hours of discouragement. Under the conditions that face us today we cannot hope that either pupils or teachers will approach our modern tongues in a spirit of reverence comparable to that which properly hallows the study of Greek and Latin. We must respect our subjects; we must, if we can, make our students respect them; but that respect will at best fall far short of veneration. Hitherto the living languages have not enjoyed even the moderate consideration that justly belongs to them; and the slight esteem in which they have been held is due mainly to the short-sighted policy of pedagogues who have too often sacrificed the substantial to the showy, the facile, and the frivolous. If we wish others to take us seriously, if our pupils are to devote sober attention to our instruction, we must set a high standard for ourselves. No magis-

terial aids will help us, no lectures or upbraidings: what we need is, in the first place, a thorough and ever-increasing knowledge of the matter we are to teach, and, secondly, a wise earnestness that is satisfied with nothing less than the real intellectual development of our scholars.

On this score, then — the honor in which our department of learning is held — we cannot, for long ages, equal the classics; but we can distinctly improve our present position. And we have an advantage which, if rightly used, may offset the lack of time-sanctioned regard: I mean the attractiveness born of actuality. If German, French, and Spanish cannot be revered, let them benefit by that affection which the youthful mind instinctively bestows on all that is alive. Let the learner realize that in studying a foreign tongue he is penetrating the life, the thought, the feeling of real people — people who are like himself in most things but interestingly divergent in others. Let him be led to compare the effects of different material environment, dissimilar national traditions, contrary ideas of beauty, various methods of utilizing words for the expression of what is in the mind. Nothing is more fascinating than such comparisons and contrasts, affording as they do ever longer and deeper glimpses into a world so near yet so remote from our ken. Few things, on the other hand, can be made more tiresome, if imparted in formal lectures, with an appalling apparatus of specimens, charts, and wall pictures of cheap and hideous design. The pupil must be aroused to see things for himself; his curiosity must be awakened by an incidental explanation, a casual remark, a timely anecdote. Tact, insight, and overflowing fullness of information must be the teacher's stock in trade. Even a comparison of grammatical forms and constructions can be made of absorbing interest, if not carried too far: a revela-



tion of the manifold ways in which human ingenuity uses speech, combined with a discussion of the relative merits of a foreign and a corresponding English idiom or inflection, may impress the facts indelibly on the hearer's memory, while kindling his desire for further knowledge. Such study has the additional advantage of imparting to the child an understanding of the real structure of English, of which he is likely, otherwise, to remain in eternal ignorance. Moreover, in languages that offer such a wide range of choice, the reading can be so selected that the subject-matter itself shall be an inducement to continued effort. Short stories of adventure, devoid of mawkish sentimentality, are most pleasing to the young beginner. Longer and more diversified works attract the student who is older or more advanced. Poetry, judiciously administered, may serve to train the ear, to cultivate the sense of beauty, to reveal the latent harmonies of language; and verse of the right kind, rightly presented, will appeal to the average girl or boy. The pieces chosen should not be too childish; children relish literature, especially poetry, that is a little above them, but look down with speechless scorn on that which lies in the least beneath their level. Furthermore, teachers should not forget that poetry is a kind of music; it is intended not merely for the mind, but for the hearing. The reason why verse, particularly French verse, is so little and in general so unsuccessfully used in the schoolroom is that very few instructors know how to read it. The real rhythm, the proper intonation can be acquired only by close and patient imitation of a native elocutionist. The teacher who does not possess the art does well, until he masters it, to avoid the Castalian spring; and he who does possess it should habitually do the "reading aloud" himself, instead of compelling his pupils to murder the verse. Only after



the learner has heard the poem many times should he be allowed to attempt it.

One reason why the living tongues are relegated to a lower plane than Greek and Latin is that people — including scholars and teachers — harbor a totally false conception of their difficulty. Our modern languages are fully as hard as the ancient, and require to be studied just as industriously. I do not believe there is or ever was a language more difficult to acquire than French; most of us can name worthy persons who have been assiduously struggling with it from childhood to mature age, and do not know it now: yet it is treated as something that anyone can pick up offhand. When I thus compare the old and the new tongues, I have in mind, of course, the degree and kind of attainment that is expected in each. If we were as careful of Latin pronunciation as we try to be of French, if we compelled our pupils to talk Greek, as we labor to make them speak German, the comparison might result differently; but even then the balance, in my opinion, would be not far from even. The obstacles to proficiency in the classics are more apparent than real, and they present themselves most conspicuously at the outset. The inflections seem formidable, but, if attacked at the age when memory is good, are soon mastered; and the very abundance of forms, with definite rules for the use of each, removes in great measure the endless and desperately intricate syntactical problems that beset the student of French. The copiousness of Latin and Greek grammar, for a scholar who really learns the language, is an advantage rather than a drawback: in a book of moderate compass he has all that he needs to know, every emergency is foreseen, every construction has its formula; a French grammar of equal size makes no provision for three-quarters of the puzzles that an

ordinary student encounters. Aside from the difference in the inherent difficulty of languages, there is a great divergence in the adequacy of textbooks. The classics have been studied so long and so well, and the field they cover is so definite and so restricted, that they are furnished with an equipment which the modern tongues can probably never rival. The completeness, the accuracy of a Latin lexicon or a Latin grammar may well fill us with envy. When I look up a strange word in a Latin dictionary, I do so with the firm belief that I shall find it, and my faith is nearly always rewarded; but when I come upon an unknown term in French, I turn to Littré or the *Dictionnaire Général* with a disheartening apprehension that it will not be there, and my foreboding is usually justified. The same thing is true of grammars and of textbooks generally. The task of the Greek or Latin teacher, compared to ours, is an easy one, and so is that of the pupil, if the learning of a given definite amount of Latin be compared with the acquisition of the same amount of French. It is an incalculable advantage to a language to appear harder than it is: both scholar and instructor approach the study seriously, school boards allow adequate provision of time and books, parents are contented to have their children work hard, and the satisfaction of achievement is multiplied fourfold. French staggers under the fearful burden of apparent easiness. The alphabet is identical with ours, although the letters all stand for different sounds; a large part of the vocabulary is spelled like English, although the meaning of the words is hardly ever exactly the same. The superficial resemblances impress the learner; the fundamental distinctions he ignores. It takes him four years or so — if he keeps on that long — to convince himself that French really demands application, and then he awakens to the fact that he has not been

learning the language at all. What he has been learning is a sort of pidjin English made up of English substitutes for French sounds and English transliterations of French words, arranged in such fashion as to signify nothing in any tongue that man ever spoke. In fact, he has never expected his text to mean anything, French being, in his conception, a kind of speech in which people talk a great deal without ever saying anything in particular. Let us consider an ordinary university class in French literature, made up of students of average ability, who have had, for the most part, some four years of French, usually three at school and one in college: it is safe to say that of these boys, at the beginning of the year, not more than one in ten can read a page of easy French understandingly. They think they understand it, while in reality they miss the point of nearly every significant sentence they read. When such pupils are once awakened from their delusion, if they are not too discouraged to continue at all, they are ready to make good progress, having realized at last that their slipshod ways have led to naught. Unhappily few reach the Socratic stage of knowing that they know nothing; and parents and school authorities are not likely to suspect the truth. German has the good fortune to seem rather hard, though not so hard as Greek and Latin: it has a queer-looking alphabet, and the beginner is obliged to memorize a good many declensions. The result is that German, in general, is much better studied and better taught, in secondary schools, than French, and a more substantial knowledge is attained. Anyone who has given elementary instruction, in school and college, in both these languages, can testify that German is twice as satisfactory to teach as French, the reason being, no doubt, that the former language looks a great deal harder while it is in reality

considerably easier. What are we to do about it? We can hardly erect scarecrows along the path of the French pupil. We can, however, refrain from distorting the truth; we can insist upon accuracy from the start, in pronunciation, in comprehension, in inflection, in construction; we can refuse to be satisfied with approximations and meaningless guesses. The whole tendency of French instruction has been to disguise its difficulty; to represent the subject as one in which serious exertion is unnecessary — a thing that can be caught by intuition; to grade the progress and conceal the obstacles so adroitly that the learner shall never be aware of them. The object of this disingenuous policy has no doubt been to induce children to study French; its effect has been the opposite, for while it may often have led pupils to elect French as a part of their program, it has uniformly deterred them from studying it.

In the case of a branch of scholarship so recently developed it is natural that there should be no underlying uniformity of purpose; and that, presumably, is why our efforts are so scattering, so unfocused. If we had a clear conception of what we are teaching a language for, we should be more likely to concentrate our forces and thus avoid the waste incident to unsystematic endeavor. Why, in fact, is it worth while to teach or to study French or German? How many of us can answer that question? How many have so much as asked it? The first and most obvious answer, the one given in three cases out of four, is that we teach French and German in order that our pupils may know these languages, because it is a pleasant and useful thing to know them. And if we inquire further in what this pleasure and this utility consist, either we receive no response at all or we are told that it is delightful to converse with foreigners and profitable to be able to conduct

foreign business correspondence. By this time it must be obvious that we are on the wrong tack. How many of our pupils, unless they have enjoyed exceptional advantages, can speak French to a Frenchman with anything like pleasure to either party? How many ever secure positions as foreign business correspondents through the training that we give them? No: if this is our object, we must confess that our instruction is a gigantic failure. And even if we succeeded, the end attained would be insignificant in proportion to the expenditure of time and labor. Only a tiny fraction of those who study French will ever go abroad or have frequent opportunity to display their skill at home; and if all those who study German are to become commercial correspondents, that profession will have to expand a thousandfold. It is just such frivolous and inane statements as those cited, and the thoughtlessness from which they spring, that have prevented our subjects from winning the esteem of the community. If our branch of learning has no better claim to consideration, it is not worthy of a place in any public school curriculum.

Let us look at the matter from another side. The modern tongues have been introduced into schools and colleges mainly as a partial or total substitute for the classics. Now, as I have said before, it is through the classics that the man of European stock, from ancient times almost until our own day, has received his mental discipline: it is they that have taught him how to observe, how to discriminate, how to reason, how to remember; they have afforded practice in analysis and synthesis; they have cultivated the taste and broadened the horizon. It is they that have given man the intellectual power to cope with any problem that may confront him; it is they that have made him an educated being. Among the other topics that our children study,



mathematics stand forth as affording a part, but only a part, of the necessary discipline: they teach concentration and accuracy, but not much more; and there is no indication that mathematical study will increase as Greek and Latin dwindle. Natural science and the host of minor subjects recently adopted, while they impart interesting and sometimes valuable information, furnish none of the requisite training. It is to modern languages that we must look for the shaping of that strong, versatile, well-rounded intelligence without which civilized man will relapse into barbarism. Perhaps, in spite of the best endeavor, French and German will prove inadequate means; if they do, either the classics must be restored or another discipline must be found, else our race will degenerate. At all events we must see to it that they have a fair trial. We have a duty and a glorious opportunity. Our object must be the discipline of the mind, the training of observation, judgment, and memory, the development of aesthetic discrimination and enjoyment, the opening of a wider outlook on the world, the cultivation of a love of good reading. If we strive with all our might for these things, we shall soon find, I am sure, that our work will assume a new dignity, our pupils will face their books with a better spirit, our department will deserve and win a respect which it has never enjoyed before; and, lastly — as a by-product, so to speak — our scholars will learn a great deal more French and German than they ever acquired when the mastery of these languages was our sole ideal.

The long vogue of the classics has given them more than an exalted position and a superior array of textbooks; it has provided them with a consistent, effective, and long-tried system of instruction. In our groping we may find a guide in the traditional practices of our elder companion;



or, to speak concretely, the French teacher may learn something by occasionally looking in upon his Latin colleague next door. It cannot be repeated too often that Latin instruction has been a success; for a thousand years or so it has been the one conspicuous success in the field of education. Our successes are still before us. A modestly receptive frame of mind is the appropriate one for us when we are face to face with classical practices. When the living tongues first began to supersede the ancient in our schools, their advent was accompanied by a spirit of enthusiastic innovation similar to that which quickened the Romantic movement in art. There was the same talk of bursting narrow bonds, discarding outworn tradition, and returning to nature. The Romantic ebullition soon subsided, leaving, however, some permanent and beneficial mementos of its passage. So it has been with the Romantic period of linguistic pedagogy: the excitement is calmed, the extravagant claims of iconoclasts are exploded, the revolutionary spirit has abated, the allurements of the new no longer blind us to the abiding worth of the old. Something, however, we have gained: the conviction that language is a thing alive and that its inherent interest must be utilized as the best incentive to study. Our experience has profited our classical brethren as well as ourselves; and if we examine their policy today, we shall see that while it has suffered no fundamental alteration, it has grafted upon itself some of the fruits of neo-linguistic theorizing. It has not, however, fallen into the error of believing that all difficulties can be solved by a formula — that will-o'-the-wisp which has led us on such mad chases. The idea that there is a pedagogic panacea, a sovereign method that can make everything right, is a fallacy that we have now well-nigh outgrown, although it still smolders, and sometimes crops

up where one would least expect it. A few years ago I received a visit from a Japanese professor, an eminently learned and practical man, who was traveling around the world on a quest for the one sovereign method of teaching a foreign language. It seems that in Japanese schools the children have English, if I remember aright, six hours a week for ten years, but seldom learn enough to be of material use. The authorities — trusting that the western world, which has been in the business a good while, had found the right formula — sent my visitor on his mission. I described to him all the methods I knew — the “natural,” the “direct,” the “cumulative,” the “categorical,” all that had ever been written with a capital *M* — but soon I found that he knew them as well as I did, and had tried them all. “Have you devised nothing better?” he asked. “Nothing,” I admitted; “haven’t you discovered a way?” “None,” said he. And we parted, sadder but no wiser than before. East and West may put their heads together: the precious formula will never come. This the Latins seem to have known all along, although there was a time when they, too, were a little dazzled by Friar Tuck’s lantern.

But Latin tradition possesses something besides the negative virtue of skepticism. It has the very positive merit of doing one thing at a time and doing that thoroughly; of building only on a firm foundation; of never stepping forward until the present foothold is secure. That, with a fitting sense of the dignity of the subject taught, and an unquestioning faith in the utility of every part of it, is the most valuable lesson that our classical colleagues can teach us. In our eagerness to hurry on to the things that seem practical and interesting, we almost invariably neglect those prosaic fundamentals without which there can be no real progress — nor even genuine, sustained interest,

because there is no understanding. The inflections of verbs, the use of pronominal forms, the significance of tenses and moods, the meaning of connectives afford the indispensable clue to the foreign sentence: to proceed without them is as futile as to engage on mathematical operations with no knowledge of the signs of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The attitude of the average schoolboy confronted with a French sentence is that which a person unacquainted with the plus mark might assume toward the formula  $a + b$ . "It is something about  $a$  and  $b$ ," he says, "but what  $a$  has to do with  $b$  I cannot tell." It is just this knowledge of the relations of words and clauses that is all-important in the comprehension of a foreign tongue. We must look out for the plus and minus symbols, and we must realize that the thorough mastery of them requires much time, drill, and patient repetition. It does not follow that the first two or three years of study should be nothing but a dull grind: the very practice in conjugation and syntax can be interestingly diversified, illustrated by attractive texts; the ingenuity of pupils may be aroused in devising new variations and in executing manifold imitations of model constructions. Furthermore, a considerable amount of fairly rapid sight-reading or translation, done at first mainly by the instructor, may be introduced, as a relief and a stimulus, from the very start. The exhilarating exercise of swift reading should never be abandoned; but we should avoid the almost universal mistake of making all translations rapid and superficial. Here is one of the chief causes of our failure. For several years, both in school and in college, a given portion of text should be minutely analyzed and parsed. In no other way can pupils be made to heed the really essential things; in no other way can the belief be hammered into them that the foreign writer actu-

ally means something, and that his words, when turned into English, must invariably make sense.

Our young school children need constant oversight. They are often left too much to their own devices. For instance, after they have had a few lessons in grammar, a bit of German is assigned to them to translate at home. This is a task for which they are totally unfit. To ask them to do it is to put upon them the work that belongs to the teacher. For a long time, all, or nearly all, the new reading or translation should be done in the classroom, and the pupil's home lesson should be a review. The same thing is true of grammar: very few children are capable of assimilating linguistic principles from a book until the rules and examples have been carefully expounded by the living voice. The bane of much of our instruction is that the master does not teach — he “hears lessons.” Vigilant watch must be kept, also, to prevent the child from falling into error through ignorance of English. This applies not only to the interpretation of grammatical statements, but likewise, and still more, to the translation of foreign texts. It is impossible, without the closest and most sympathetic attention, to imagine what idea a common English word may suggest to the youthful mind. I remember that in a class which I was visiting a little girl translated the German *schlau* by *pretty*. Her teacher corrected, rebuked, and passed on. Wondering how the child got such a notion, I turned to the vocabulary of the reader, and there I found the definition, *schlau* — *cunning*. The only meaning that this child, or almost any American of her years, ever attached to *cunning* was *pretty*. A large proportion of the faulty translation that so vexes teachers is due merely to lack of familiarity with English words; and for this the child is seldom to blame. The difficulty is increased in the

case of boys and girls of foreign parentage who have no native language at all. In the evening high schools of Boston I have met many a youth of eighteen or twenty who scarcely had the gift of human speech: his parents, perhaps, spoke only German, the school teachers had spoken only English, and he had never learned either tongue well enough to do anything but express the most rudimentary concepts. Such pupils naturally demand special treatment and unwearying patience.

In our field of education, more, perhaps, than in any other, the attempt has been made to fit the same coat upon all comers: sometimes the infant has been smothered in the pedagogic raiment of the grown-up; oftener the adult has been all too scantily clad in the educational dress of babyhood. It seems self-evident — but it obviously needs to be repeated many times — that the method best suited to one age not only may be, but must be, ill adapted to another; that a course which is natural to the child must be unnatural to the man. Some general principles the pedagogue should always bear in mind; but the application of them, the method itself, should vary with perfect freedom according to the age, antecedents, and ability of the scholars. It should vary, also, in accordance with the character and competence of the master. Few spectacles are more painful than that of a teacher conscientiously endeavoring to pursue a course for which he is by nature or training unfit. Everyone who adopts the pedagogic profession should strive to qualify himself to pattern his instruction after any rational system that may be required; but every born teacher will develop out of the system adopted a way of his own.

If a language is to seem alive it must be read aloud and spoken. And here we meet the greatest of the permanent



and unavoidable obstacles in our field of instruction — the difficulty of pronunciation. Here again the French teacher has a harder task than the German: firstly, because the French sounds and intonations are more remote from American habits, secondly, because the standard exacted by the French ear is higher than that demanded by the German, and thirdly, because proficiency in German pronunciation is often facilitated by the presence of many pupils of German extraction. I shall therefore consider primarily the French side of the problem, although the general principles involved belong equally to German. It is well to accept once for all the fact that French pronunciation is hard and requires a vast amount of intelligent teaching and patient exercise. Almost invariably it is slighted. In bad schools it is scarcely taught at all, the teacher expecting that scholars will “pick it up” — heaven knows where. Hosts of boys are sent up to college who do not even know that the *s* at the end of plural nouns is silent. For such pupils French is no living language — it can hardly be a language at all. Other teachers, more conscientious, waste a great deal of time in hearing pupils read aloud without ever having taught them how to read. Such reading merely confirms them in their bad habits. The commonest mistake consists in offering only a brief (and generally incorrect) exposition of principles at the first lesson and then trusting to subsequent occasional directions and a large amount of uncorrected reading. There is only one time to learn to pronounce, and that is at the very beginning: if scholars do not pronounce right, they will pronounce wrong; and when they have pronounced wrong for some months they are generally incurable. Not only do they take no pleasure in their work, feeling that what they acquire is a mere sham, but they are afraid to open their mouths to utter a French

sound; if they want to ask the meaning of a French word, they do not dare to speak, because they cannot pronounce it. The bogey of French pronunciation cannot be dodged; it must be conquered. Now, many American teachers who know this full well, and are anxious to do their duty, have not the courage to undertake the task, being conscious that their own pronunciation is imperfect. Of course an instructor should embrace every opportunity to prepare himself for his business in every way, and in this respect more than any other; but the idea that a teacher not to the manner born is unfit to impart a good pronunciation is a delusion as harmful as it is natural. The best results I have ever seen achieved in French pronunciation, with large classes of schoolboys, were obtained by an elderly American gentleman whose own accent, though carefully acquired, was not that of a Parisian. I am not sure that he had ever been abroad. But he taught pronunciation with the same seriousness and thoroughness with which he taught grammar, composition, or translation; he never would let a class go until every member of it pronounced as well as he did; and while his pronunciation was far from satisfactory to himself, it was admirable in the mouth of a pupil. Indeed, on the general question whether a Frenchman or an American is the better teacher of French pronunciation, there may well be a difference of opinion. There are advantages on both sides. The Frenchman has confidence in himself, and this confidence is shared by his scholars, who feel sure that they are getting the real thing; this is worth much. On the other hand, the American knows the difficulties that are to be overcome: if he has succeeded in consciously acquiring an absolutely good accent, he is obviously in a position to show others how to do it; if he has not, his pronunciation, moderately good but less foreign

than that of the foreigner, is less discouraging to his pupils and more readily imitated by them.

Of whatever race the master be, he should not be satisfied with English substitutes for French sounds. Usually there is no attempt made to teach any French sound but *u* and the four nasal vowels; all the rest are unquestioningly replaced by the English vowels and consonants that most nearly resemble them, although both teachers and pupils may be haunted by the consciousness that they are really pronouncing English and not French at all. Especial pains should be taken to appropriate some kind of French *r*; the *r* may, indeed, be regarded as the central feature in the acquisition of any foreign language by an English-speaking person. Perhaps the most striking and characteristic element of a spoken tongue — the one by which we guess the nationality of a stranger without understanding a word he says — is intonation, the varied sequence of pitch; and that is seldom even mentioned in schools. Every language has its familiar inflections; these should be taught as carefully as the individual sounds. Very helpful is a set of phrases provided with a musical notation of pitch and time. For the proper study of the single vowels and consonants a phonetic alphabet is very desirable; without it the beginner, unless he be provided with a phonograph, cannot practise by himself and is helpless the moment he leaves his teacher.

With a full consciousness of what is before him, with a definite, systematic plan of campaign, with such help as may be needed in the way of alphabet and music, the instructor should first drill his class long and carefully in single sounds, then in syllables, then in words, and finally in sentences — always taking care that his pupils hear more of his own correct pronunciation than of the faulty utter-

ance of their comrades. Sound, syllable, word, or phrase should be spoken by the learner immediately after the master, before the auditory impression has become blurred. If this initial practice is faithfully and rightly conducted, the subsequent training — and there must be much of it throughout the course — will be interesting and comparatively easy. Then both teacher and pupil will have the satisfaction of at least striving to attain genuine French and German. The schoolboy's diffidence — his unwillingness to hear his own voice attempting the strange tongue — will vanish; a sense of mastery will replace his distrust. Then, and then only, will the modern languages come into their own; not until then can we answer the question whether modern language teaching is a failure.

## VI

### THE DARK AGES<sup>1</sup>

THE *Century Dictionary* gives the following definition: "The *dark ages*, a period of European history, beginning with or shortly before the fall of the Roman Empire of the West (A.D. 476), marked by a general decline of learning and civilization. It was introduced by the great influx of barbarians into western Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries known as the wandering of the nations, and is reckoned by Hallam as extending to the eleventh century, when a general revival of wealth, manners, taste, and learning began, and by others to the time of Dante in the thirteenth century, or later." This last extension we may well leave out of account; for to apply the term "dark" to the century that saw the greatest scholar, the greatest theologian, and the greatest poet of our Christian era would be too manifestly unfit.

Let us confine our darkness to the period between the fifth century and the eleventh. It will be all the more opaque for this concentration. And then, pulling down the shades before and behind, let us try to realize how dark the darkness really was. I shall ask you to plunge with me into the very thick of it. We are at the Frankish court in the eighth century, on a visit to the Palace School. Into this ancient institution of the Franks some new spirit was infused by Charlemagne, who became himself a pupil,

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered before the Modern Language Association of America in Philadelphia, on Dec. 26, 1912.



having called in Alcuin as a teacher. Here is his opinion (recorded, to be sure, by his master) of the value of a liberal education: "Could anyone really interested in the pursuit and investigation of matters so important to society at large, and truly desirous of practising such excellent virtues, have it in his heart to hazard the daring assertion that our discussion has been in vain? For myself I frankly confess that love of knowledge only has prompted my questions; and I thank you for your kindness in answering them. I highly value the affectionate candor of your replies, and feel convinced that they will be most profitable to all who without prejudice or the blot of envy may sit down and read them."

Today we are not so easily satisfied. At the recent meeting of the National Education Association in Chicago, according to the papers, "high school education throughout the United States was branded as 'generally bookish, scholastic, abstract, and inadequate to meet the practical problems of life,' in a report submitted to the national council. . . . The report, based on investigation in twenty-five States, declared the system of high school teaching is just where it was thirty years ago and that this backwardness is due to the plan of high schools to prepare pupils 'for colleges and universities rather than for life.' 'The whole trouble with our high school education,' " declared the reader of the report, " 'is that it is regarded too much as merely a preparation for the university. Instead of dealing with the problems of life today, the students are taught to deal with the language, politics and customs of fifteen centuries ago. Nearly all the high school teachers are college graduates who have no adequate knowledge of affairs outside of colleges. Their teaching is, therefore, bookish, scholastic, and abstract. We need a

change of aim in high school teaching, a look in the direction of the farm, shop, and home. While we do not recommend an education entirely vocational, we urge a departure from the college idea.' "

If we have reason for discontent even now, after so many ages of enlightenment, what must have been the barbarous teaching inflicted on the children of the eighth century? What can they have had to compare with a really modern high school curriculum compounded, let us say, of some English, a little German, a bit of elementary algebra, a sample of plane geometry, some pages of American history, practice in geometrical and freehand drawing, a good deal of shop-work, lessons in bookkeeping (of a type used only in schools), training in salesmanship, a few hours of botany, physiology, and calisthenics? When Alcuin was a boy, the secular course, in the school he attended, comprised these subjects: grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence, poetry, astronomy, physics, and explanation of the Old Testament. Alcuin studied also the theology of the New Testament, science, and general literature. If the present day course is "generally bookish," what shall we call this?

Now let us suppose that the pupil has received his elementary training, bookish or bookless as the case may be, and, pushing his studies further, craves admission to the brotherhood of scholars. In our era, as you are all aware, the thing for him to do is to make himself an undisputed authority in some special matter, such as: the art of fishing among the ancient Greeks; the serpent motive in the ancient art of Central America and Mexico; isolation as a criterion of species; the heredity of coat color in mice; some new derivatives of pyromucic acid; the origin of the stratified rocks of the New York series; the ways

and means of making payments; reactions of the crayfish to sensory stimuli; the expansion and compressibility of ether and alcohol in the neighborhoods of their boiling points — typical subjects culled at random from a list of the particular fields cultivated at some time by students of distinction at my own university. I say “culled at random.” I should modify that statement. My choice was restricted by the need of picking titles which I could pronounce and you could understand. Now it is not to be imagined for a moment that the cultivator of any one of these gardens has ever tasted the fruit of any other — that the man who fishes among the ancient Greeks knows anything about the ways and means of making payments, or that the experimenter in the compressibility of alcohol can divine the serpent motive in Central American art. No. Each keeps strictly to his own domain. The one, blind to the reactions of the crayfish, limits his diet to new derivatives of pyromucic acid; the other, heedless of the dangers of isolation as a criterion of species, confines his walks to the stratified rocks of New York. Was it thus, say, in the seventh century? Quite the contrary. To be a scholar in those remote times, one had to know all of these subjects, or the things whose places they have taken — studies of corresponding difficulty and importance. Look at St. Isidore's *Origins*: not a work of genius, by any means, but a specimen of the kind of erudition a Dark Age man was expected to possess, if he wanted to be regarded as a master. The twenty books of that work treat of grammar; rhetoric and dialectics; mathematics; medicine; laws and times; ecclesiastical books and services; God, the angels, and religious orders; church and sects, with a discussion of pagan gods; laws and societies; miscellaneous lexicographical material; man and portents; animals; the

world and its parts; the earth and its parts; building and fields; stones and metals; agriculture; war and sports; ships, buildings, clothes; food and implements. But (you will say) all of this information is second-hand, most of it is superficial, much of it is false; it is better to find out something fresh and true about the heredity of coat color in mice than to burden one's mind with a mass of heterogeneous and doubtful learning. Yet I ask: is it? From the point of view of science, regarded as an end in itself, you are probably right — although I may remark here that the accusation of inaccuracy is a dangerous stone for the scholarship of one age to throw at that of another: who can tell how the results of all our "original research" will look to the learned world a thousand years hence? From the standpoint of the state, on the other hand, the best gift anyone can bestow is that of a judicious, well-rounded citizen, fully informed in the soundest learning his age can give. And in the interest of the individual, is not breadth of understanding about as important as anything? I wonder whether there is to be found among the monarchs of the world today — or even among the presidents — one who could translate a difficult philosophical work from Latin into the vernacular. Yet this was done by a ninth-century English king who surely left nothing to be desired on the score of efficiency.

Let us turn back to Charlemagne, one of whose biographers tells us that the great king "was ever learning, and fond of learning; no subject came amiss to him; everything from the most commonplace everyday occurrences to the profoundest philosophical and theological inquiries interested him. The price of commodities; the stocking and planting of farms; the building of houses, churches, palaces, bridges, fortresses, ships, and canals;

the course of the stars; the text of the Scriptures; the appointment of schools; the sallies of wit; the hair-splitting subtleties of metaphysics; the unknown depths of theology; the origins of law; the reason of usage in the manner and life of the nations; their traditions in poetry, legend, and song; the mysterious framework of liturgical forms; musical notation; the Gregorian chant; the etymology of words; the study of languages; the flexion of verbs; and many more topics. . . . He spoke Latin as fluently as German, and had a fair knowledge of Greek. Einhart says that 'he spent much time and labor with Alcuin in the study of rhetoric, dialectics, and astronomy, learned arithmetic, and with eager curiosity and intelligent scrutiny applied himself to the investigation of the motions of the heavenly bodies.' "

Einhart relates further: " After a long absence the most victorious Charles returned into Gaul, and caused the children, whom he had left with Clement as his pupils, to be brought before him. He required them to be examined, and was amazed at the commendable progress of the poorer class of children, whose written productions were most creditable to them. On the other hand, those of illustrious parentage showed very poor specimens of their skill. He then set the good scholars on his right, and the bad on his left, saying: ' I praise you much, dear children, for your excellent efforts, and desire you to continue so that you may attain unto perfection; then I intend to give you rich bishoprics, or splendid abbeys, and shall ever regard you as persons of merit.' Then he turned in anger to those on his left, who trembled at his frowns and the sound of his voice, which resembled the roll of thunder, as he cried out to them: ' Look here, ye scions of the best nobility, ye pampered ones, who, trusting to your birth or fortune,



have disobeyed me, and instead of studying, as you were bound and I expected you to do, have wasted your time in idleness, on play, luxury, or unprofitable occupation.' He then took his accustomed oath, and with uplifted head and arm, said in a voice of thunder: 'By the king of heaven, let others admire you as much as they please; as for me, I set little store by your birth or beauty; understand ye and remember it well, that unless you give heed speedily to amend your past negligence by diligent study, you will never obtain anything from Charles.' "

Imagine, if you can, one of our college presidents or trustees, or a governor at Commencement, "taking his accustomed oath" and addressing the "swells" and "sports" in such a style as this — and promising "rich bishoprics and splendid abbeys" to the "greasy grinds!" Why, we ourselves, the official advocates of study, generally feel constrained to express our admiration of it in deprecatory terms. How often is it dinned into our ears that scholastic success is no test of real ability, that the men most useful in after-life are those who scorn to devote themselves to books! Yet Charlemagne was no mere academic theorist. Contrast with his attitude the supercilious pose so prevalent today — prevalent among adults, and still more among children. Has the world ever seen a more completely self-satisfied being than an empty-headed American high school pupil? Here is an interesting bit from the notes of a recent English traveler in our country, who had been visiting one of our institutions of learning: "I had formed no theory as to the value of some of the best juvenile education in the Eastern States. But I had learned one thing. I knew the secret of the fine, proud bearing of young America. A child is not a fool; a child is almost always uncannily shrewd. And when it sees a

splendid palace provided for it, when it sees money lavished on hygienic devices for its comfort, even upon trifles for its distraction, when it sees brains all bent on discovering the best, nicest ways of dealing with its instincts, when it sees itself the centre of a magnificent pageant, ritual, devotion, almost worship, it naturally lifts its chin, puts its shoulders back, steps out with a spring, and glances confidently upon the whole world. Who wouldn't ? ”

There is a supreme type of self-complacency which is born of sheer ignorance, an ignorance so absolute as to be unaware of the existence of anything to learn. And this self-complacency, I have already said, is not confined to school children: it is shared by old and young. It may be called the dominating spirit of our time. One of its marks is a contempt for thorough knowledge and a profound distrust of anyone who is really well-informed. An expert opinion on any subject becomes valueless the moment we learn that it emanates from a “ college professor.” When a conspicuously competent person is suggested for public office, the most damning accusation that can be hurled at him is the epithet “ academic.” Few, indeed, can bear up under the suspicion of actually knowing something.

A very serious college paper publishes an article by an evidently earnest young man who maintains that scholarship is essentially narrow and selfish; the really generous student is he who works, not for the cultivation of his own mind, but for the glory of his college. As if a college could derive glory from anything but the fulfillment of its proper mission, the cultivation of the individual minds entrusted to it! The altruistic tone assumed by devotees of college amusements is peculiarly irritating. I am willing that children should make mud pies: it is their nature to. But when they begin to declare that they are

making mud pies, not for their own delectation, but for the embellishment of their city, it is time they were sent on errands for their mother. Students are always ready to do anything but study. Study is hard and distasteful, because our boys and girls have never been used to mental concentration; any other activity, whether it be athletics or "social service," seems to them less painful, hence more profitable. You are all aware how dangerous it is to assume, on the part of our college classes, any definite knowledge of any subject. Last year I had occasion to question a good many students about our friend Charlemagne; and one after another unblushingly assigned him to the eighteenth century. A colleague in a "fresh water" college could find no one in his class who knew what event is celebrated on the fourth of July. In a course in French literature, taken mainly by Juniors, a request to compare a certain drama with *Othello* drew forth the admission that a considerable part of the class knew nothing of Shakespeare's play. "We had *Hamlet*," they cried, as if Shakespeare were a disease from which one attack made them immune. Of course it had never occurred to them that anyone could be so mad as to read a book not prescribed. You must have noticed how very difficult it has become for college students not only to write but to read their mother tongue. We give them books to study, and the boys, for the most part, obligingly plow through them, for they are good fellows; but they are no wiser after than before. The text has conveyed nothing to them, because they do not know the meaning of common English words.

It is not to be supposed (let me say once more) that this vast and growing ignorance is peculiar to school and college. It pervades society. Even the teacher and the author are coming under its sway. Men of note are losing

the power to speak or write their own language. This subject was tellingly discussed by our last year's president, and I need not dwell upon it.

The confusion of tongues, however, is not the only plague fostered by darkness. Ignorance, having no means of comparison, necessarily lacks a criterion, and is therefore an easy prey to specious fallacy. It runs after every novelty that for the moment appeals to its rudimentary imagination. At what previous age in the history of mankind has there been such a cult of the absurd as we see today? In art, literature, music, science, history, psychology, education, religion, politics, the charlatan is sure of a congregation, provided his antics be sufficiently startling and grotesque. In the field of humor Washington Irving yields to Mutt and Jeff. In religion, we see flourishing sects whose very names seem like a blasphemous caricature. New schools of psychology are busily explaining the noted characters of fiction in the light of arbitrary and eccentric physiological theories. Musicians vie with one another in noisy cacophony. Of one of the latest of the sowers of discord an up-to-date critic says: "In his earlier years he wrote music which was thoroughly clear and understandable, though of no special value. Then, I surmise, he decided to draw attention to himself forcibly by producing things of that wild extravagance which he is now putting forth. It was a sort of artistic lie. But there are plenty of persons who, if they tell lies long enough, will actually end by implicitly believing them to be the truth. That is ——'s case. He has come to believe so implicitly in his own artistic lie that he now lies with absolute sincerity. He wants to be a revolutionist for the sake of being one." Of how many of our one-day prophets can the same thing be said! Our critic

goes on to describe a composition by this artist: "It was music which sounded something like what you might expect if you placed a child at the piano and allowed him to pound as he wished. Do not imagine I say this because I am not modern in my sympathies. There are few who are more so than I. The unhappy consequence of all this is that —— has founded a school and has a number of disciples who try to ape his style without possessing his musical knowledge. And it so stands that anybody will soon be able to write music, and however impossible the things may turn out, they will be seriously accepted as such."

In art, the Impressionists have long since been succeeded by the Post-Impressionists, the Futurists, and the Cubists. The Futurists, according to their own definition, "stand upon the extreme promontory of the centuries; and why should they look behind, when they have to break in mysterious portals of the Impossible." "To admire an old picture," they say, "is to pour our sensitiveness into a funeral urn, instead of casting it forward in violent gushes of creation and action." "We stand," they declare, "on the summit of the world, and cast our challenge to the stars." "We must destroy in sculpture, as in every art, the traditional nobility of marble, and bronze also must go. The sculptor can and must employ twenty different substances, such as glass, wood, cardboard, cement, horsehair, leather, wool, mirrors, electric light, and concrete. In the straight lines of a match there is more truth and beauty than in all the muscular contortions of the Laocoön." One of the products of this school is thus described: "Today at the Salon d'Automne I have seen a Futurist sculpture group, and a most extraordinary achievement it is. It does not fulfill all the demands of the new art, for it is in the medium of



plaster, and there were no signs of such adventitious adornments as horsehair, mirrors, electric lights, and so on. I should judge that it is intended to represent a group of wrestlers, but I speak humbly and under correction; it may have been intended for a battle-field or a surgical operation. It is a medley of arms and legs, flowering, so to speak, from a single torso. No head was visible. It is the principle of the cinematograph applied to sculpture." "Futurism," says an English journal, "is nothing but a Latin Quarter escapade. But it is none the less a symptom of the age. . . . It is the cult of violence for its own sake. It finds a motor car more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace. . . . It is the art of an age which is turning to irrationalism in politics as in metaphysics." I remember examining, a few years ago, a pretentious Italian periodical devoted to Futurism. Its battle-cry was "Down with everything!" It would be satisfied with nothing short of the overthrow of all existing institutions and the creation of a brand-new society and art. Especially were museums and libraries to be consigned to utter destruction. The published specimens of the new art, which thus modestly offers itself as more than a substitute for all that has been, make one quite content to die before the Futurist future dawns.

Of the Cubists an ordinarily sedate critic has this to say: "In this Autumn Salon, the snobbery of a few good souls has been pleased to group morose and maniac geometers with delirious dyers, crazily covering their defenseless canvases with color puddles and diagrams which you would say had been traced by some demented Bouvard and Pécuchet. One of the most unformed daubs of this Salon is dedicated: 'To mariners, travelers, and mountebanks.' Taking into account the foreigners, cranks, and humbugs

who are the main originality of this Salon — in which 'French' taste was to be renewed — we wonder the organizing committee did not choose this 'symbolic and synthetic' picture for its poster." Here is a description of a picture named "Mountaineers Attacked by Bears," and dated "Annecy 1911 — Paris 1912": "If I guess the rebus aright, then you must make out in this picture's tangle not only the episode of its title, but the route from Annecy to Paris, railway and bridges, telegraph wires, and the compartment in which the painter sat during his journey, and the house in which he lives, as well as the mountain site where the wicked bears attacked the poor travelers — and the gun they used for their defense. Of bears and mountaineers, of road and landscape, only unformed morsels and scattered bits, thrown and cut about at random, remain, so that the mother bear herself would no more recognize her little ones than her victims."

Concerning Post-Impressionism an expert tells us: "The essence of Post-Impressionism is to distrust or to scorn all tradition, and the diligence with which this distrust or scorn is being expressed by faithful adherence to a new tradition makes one wonder if the attraction may not be, not the principles of the school, but the short cut it seems to offer to art." It is no doubt true that many of the senseless fads in all branches of mental activity are due, in their inception, to the over-abundance of respectable mediocrity, an abundance which leaves little chance of recognition to the man of unbounded ambition but moderate endowments, unless he can invent some glaring extravagance to make himself conspicuous. But his trumpeting would avail nothing, were it not for the dense ignorance of his public. Lack of knowledge means lack of judgment, and lack of judgment feeds the pretender. It is easier to

make a big stench than a sweet fragrance; and the fouler the odor, the more inclined are the incompetent to sniff rapturously and ejaculate: "How strong!" Listen to Frederic Harrison on *The Cult of the Foul*: "The new craze under which we are now suffering is the Cult of the Foul, or to put it in Greek, it may be dubbed Aischrolatreia — worship or admiration of the Ugly, the Nasty, the Brutal. Poetry, Romance, Drama, Painting, Sculpture, Music, Manners, even Dress, are now recast to suit popular taste by adopting forms which hitherto have been regarded as unpleasing, gross, or actually loathsome. To be refined is to be 'goody-goody'; gutter slang is 'so actual'; if a ruffian tramp knifes his pal, it is 'so strong'; and if on the stage his ragged paramour bites off a rival's ear, the halfpenny press screams with delight. Painters are warned against anything 'pretty,' so they dab on bright tints to look like a linoleum pattern, or they go for subjects to a thieves' kitchen. The one aim in life, as in Art, is to shock one's grandmother."

Does all this signify that we are more vicious, more depraved than our fathers? Are we witnessing a violent reaction against accepted canons of decency in life? I do not think so. It does not seem to me that the general moral conduct of the community is worse than it has been before. If art, letters, dress are more indecent, it simply means that we are more ignorant. By our neglect of the past we have cut ourselves off from standards of all kinds, and hence, like the new-born moth, are attracted by the first glare. Dante had a word to say on this theme, many centuries ago: "Just as the man who has lost the sight of his bodily eyes has to depend on others for the distinction of good and bad, so he who possesses not the light of discrimination always follows after the shout, be it true or

false. . . . Thus these blind people, who are well-nigh countless, resting their hands on the shoulders of lying guides, fall into the ditch, from which they cannot escape. It is especially men of the people who are bereft of the light of judgment, because, taken up from the beginning of their life with some trade, they are obliged so to concentrate their minds on it that they think of naught else. And inasmuch as the habit of any virtue, moral or intellectual, cannot be assumed at once, but must be acquired by practice, and they practise nothing but their handicraft and bestow no care on other things, it is impossible for them to have judgment. . . . They should be called sheep, not men. For if one sheep should throw itself over a high cliff, all the others would go after it."

This is a passage to be meditated by our professional educators. There was a time when schools attempted, at least, to cultivate discrimination and to furnish the material on which selection can be founded; but in these days of "vocational training," when pupils are encouraged "to practise nothing but their handicraft," it is, in Dante's words, "impossible for them to have judgment." And it is inevitable that in their blindness they should follow false guides; for the loudest bellow is sure to issue from the windiest prophet, the biggest blaze from those luminaries that would rather be flashlights, and dazzle for one instant, than gleam as modest but permanent stars in the sky. "They that be wise," says a once popular book, "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." But none of this for our Futurists, Post-Futurists, and Neo's of every description. They have all taken as their watch-word the motto of the melancholy jockey in *The Arcadians*:

A short life and a gay one!

One is tempted to say that the motto of their disciples is that phrase of Tertullian's: "Credo quia absurdum." But that would not be quite just. They do not believe in folly (as Tertullian, for a quite different reason, did in wisdom) because it is absurd, but because they do not know how absurd it is, and because folly has a louder voice than common sense. Just as, in a crowded street on a rainy day, every wayfarer tries to lift his umbrella above all the others, so every preacher today is trying to raise his utterance to a higher pitch than all his competitors. Only by surpassing shrillness of exaggeration can we get a hearing. We all feel it — the politician on the stump, the clergyman in the pulpit, the professor in the classroom — even the president of a learned society delivering his presidential address: and we all yield more or less to the temptation. If we do not, we are consigned to back seats as "mere teachers," and get no more attention than an organ-grinder playing *Trovatore*.

By this time it may have occurred to some of you that the Dark Age I am discussing is not the period extending from the fifth to the eleventh century, but a much nearer one. I suggest, indeed, that we alter the *Century* definition to something like this: "The *dark ages*, an epoch in the world's history, beginning with or shortly after the French Revolution, marked by a general extension and cheapening of education resulting in a vast increase of self-confident ignorance. It was induced by the gradual triumph of democracy, and will last until the masses, now become arbiters of taste and science, shall have been raised to the level formerly occupied by the privileged classes."

It is doubtless true that the aggregate of knowledge, at the present day, is greater than ever before; but it is equally true that the large shareholders in this knowledge



are no longer in control. Leadership has been assumed by the untrained host, which is troubled by no doubt concerning its competence and therefore feels no inclination to improve its judgment. The ignorance characteristic of our Dark Age is a supremely self-satisfied ignorance. Ours is, I think, the first period in human history to belie Aristotle's saying, "All men naturally desire to know." Never before were conditions so favorable to the easy diffusion of a false semblance of information. Cheap magazines, Sunday supplements, moving pictures have taken the place of books. Quickly scanned and quickly forgotten, they leave in the mind nothing but the illusion of knowledge. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the number of persons who have received some schooling is more considerable than in any previous century; but this admission must be accompanied by the corollary that the schooling is proportionately ineffective. The more widely education has been diffused, the thinner it has been spread. We have now reached a stage where it seems to be on the verge of reverting to the old system of apprenticeship to a trade. All this is natural and inevitable. It is scarcely conceivable that democracy should ever relinquish its hold. The civilized world is committed to the principle of majority rule, believing that the supremacy of the many results in the greatest good to the greatest number. The masses must come into their inheritance, even if that heritage, in their unskilled hands, bear for a long time but little fruit.

In the early stages of the leveling process, the tendency was to lift the plebs up toward the mental condition of the patricians. Little by little, however, the power of inertia has reversed the movement, and now equalization has come to mean the lowering of the brahmin to the dead

level of the intellectual pariah. It is of this "downward revision" of education that I am complaining, not of the great democratic evolution of which it is an unfortunate by-product. We are confronted by a definite evil, which can and must be corrected; otherwise it would be useless to complain at all. How frequently do we hear that the high school diploma, and even the college degree, should be "within the reach of every American boy!" And the strongest tendency in our education today is to put it there. When this dream shall have been realized, the result will evidently be that the degree will be worth nothing to anybody. The Spaniards have a saying that all Basques are noble; so every American, it would seem, should be *ex officio* a Bachelor of Arts. I have often thought that the only way to satisfy the popular demand would be to confer the A.B. on every child at its birth. But we can never make a man a scholar by calling him one. If democracy is to be a success (as we all hope and believe), that end must be reached not by degrading education to the present taste of the lowest part of the demos, but by lifting the demos to a better understanding of the value of learning.

This all-important task has fallen of late into poor hands. The principal of a big high school was discussing with me, not long ago, the wholesale migration of the better class of pupils from public to private establishments. "Parents," he said, "are discovering that their children are getting next to nothing in the public school. Why is it? When I compare the men who taught me, and taught me well, with the present teachers, who can hardly be said to teach anybody anything, I am puzzled to account for the difference. The older men were really no better scholars than the new ones, and worked no harder. The only explanation I can offer is that the earlier generation knew nothing

of pedagogy." What he rashly spoke, many masters are thinking. However, it seems to me that we must, in justice, make a distinction between pedagogy and pseudo-pedagogy. The former exists, although the latter is so much more in evidence that the name "educator," for many intelligent people, has become a term of opprobrium. While the genuinely serious student of education is still groping, trying to find a spot on which to lay the foundations of a science, a host of pseudo-educators, too uninstructed to know any better, are loudly proclaiming themselves sole possessors of the whole secret of the art of teaching. An easy career has been opened to young men not overburdened with wit or learning. Having collected some information about school administration and the history of pedagogical speculation, a set of arbitrary formulas, some bits of dubious psychology, and, above all, an imposing technical vocabulary, they are accepted as prophets by an equally ignorant public, and given control of our schools. A specialist writes in *The Forum*: "For a decade or two we have taught theories rather than children, and the result is that the children have scarcely been educated."

Even worse than empty theorizing is the disposition to cater to the native indolence of the pupil and the foolish indulgences of the parent. Listen to the words of the new president of Amherst College, as reported by the press: "The boy chooses on some special line — the line of vocation, the line of 'snaps,' the line of a certain profession or the days that will let the student get out of town. What do you get? Any sort of training? None at all. . . . The old classical curriculum believed that if you take certain studies and work them through you'd get out of them the deepest things of human experience." Alas! what

does the typical boy or the typical parent or the typical educator care for "the deepest things of human experience?" The phrase has an unpleasant suggestion of the difficult and the unpractical, and to call a study "unpractical" is to damn it to the "lowest hell." What we term "vocational training," being the most "practical" thing of all and offering no considerable difficulty to the pupil (much of it being, in fact, in the nature of play), is now first in favor. It is surely an excellent thing in its place — as a supplement to education or as an apprenticeship for those who must remain uneducated. I believe it is destined to render great service. But let us not make the mistake of calling it "education." It should prepare a boy to succeed in his business; probably it will, when it is better developed. But it affords no more education than is to be derived from the business itself. When we say that "life is a school," we are conscious that our phrase is a figure of speech: "vocational education" is another. Perhaps the worst feature of it is that "vocational" subjects are so apt to be chosen, not from vocation, not with any intention of preparing for a career, but merely for the purpose of avoiding real study.

The confusion arising from a new conception of the functions of the state and the school, and from the necessity of providing some kind of training adapted to the needs of all, has given currency to certain fallacies, which it is the duty of the better informed members of society to meet and combat. First of all, let us ask ourselves what should be the purpose of education in a democracy. Should it be solely to fit men and women to perform efficiently their daily economic task? That is, of course, an important function, but it cannot be all. Otherwise progress would become impossible as far as schooling can make it

so, and the life of man would hardly differ from that of a horse. If the only object of life is to stay alive, of what use is it to live at all? The ideal of economic efficiency is best realized by a machine. But the individuals we have to deal with are not machines: they are human beings of almost infinite capacities, destined to be citizens and parents. They must be capable of living the life of the spirit, of appreciating the good things in nature, in conduct, and in art; they must be able to cope intelligently with weighty problems of public policy; they must leave behind them descendants who shall be more, rather than less, competent than themselves. The higher we rise in the scale of development, the less conspicuous the purely economic aspect of the individual becomes.

"Let us cut loose from the past," is another favorite cry, "and devote ourselves to the practical issues of the day! The past is dead. We will turn our backs upon it, and give ourselves to the living present." How familiar these words have become in the public press and in college papers, and in assemblies of educators! Anything that bears the label of actuality attracts the throng, whether it be on the book-shelf or on the stage, in the public lecture-hall or in the academic classroom. College courses dealing with supposedly practical and contemporary things are as crowded as those which reveal the treasures of the past are deserted. Significant of this mood is the frequency with which we see on a theater program the notice: "Time — the Present." "Only the present is real," say the modernists. On the contrary, say I, nothing is more unreal, more elusive, more fictitious. The time that was present when I began this sentence is now gone by. The present is an illusion: it is a perpetually shifting mathematical line dividing the future of which (humanly speak-



ing) we know nothing, from the past, of which we know much.

This clamor for the present resolves itself, then, into a demand for the recent past. But where shall we find the demarcation between the recent past and the more remote? At what period of man's existence has there been a break in the continuity of his history? Is there a date since which human experience has had no connection with that which preceded? Search as we may, we shall discover nothing but an endless chain. Today's thoughts and happenings can be understood only in the light of yesterday's, and those only through their relation to the events of the day before. All the knowledge we possess, save in abstract matters outside the confines of time, is of the past, and the further back we can project our vision, the more comprehensive, the more thorough, the more efficient is that knowledge. The more efficient; and the more practical. For our only guide in affairs public and private is comparison with bygone things. What men shall do is determined by what men have done; what men are to be is revealed by what men have been. Everyone agrees that among all subjects of study none is more essential nor more interesting than human nature.

The proper study of mankind is man

is as familiar a quotation as ever. And where is man better to be studied than in his records? Just compare — in number, in variety, in significance — the people whom you know in the flesh with those you know through books. "The reading of all good books," says Descartes, "is like a conversation with the best people of bygone centuries."

Let me quote a paragraph from a contributor to one of our leading journals: "Universities are beginning to see

that theoretical, or absolute, truth — the sort upon which ideals are founded — is difficult to deduce from a narrow study of actual, contemporary life. Existence examined at close range means loss of perspective. . . . Not only do young men find it hard to project themselves back of the present, but equally hard to pursue any line of thought which has no practical bearings." Why is it that the study of the past seems irksome to the new generation? It is partly because such study requires concentration and judgment. But a more potent reason is to be found in a false view of life, due to a shallow interpretation of socialism — an idea that humanity is about to take a fresh start, unhampered by all the influences that have made it. Progress is possible only through utilization of experience. A child with no parents or other elders to direct it would be an idiot. If each individual had not profited by the successes and failures of his predecessors, we should still be in a state of primeval protoplasm. The present generation calls itself practical. But think of the waste of effort that even partial ignorance of the past entails! We must compute not only the trials and losses that might have been avoided by knowledge of what others have done, but also the labor spent in duplication, in learning lessons and working out results long since accessible to the world.

Another prevalent fallacy, which has found favor even in high quarters, is the belief that for the training of the young one subject is just as good as another. This is surely, on the face of it, an amazing doctrine to promulgate: it runs counter to all tradition and, as far as I am aware, to all contemporary experience. One would think the burden of proof should rest on its confessors. Yet they have offered not a shred of evidence — nothing but bald assertion. And on the basis of this empty vocifera-

tion school programs and college admission requirements are overturned. Perhaps our age has furnished no better example than this of its sheeplike sequacity. We, here present, are nearly all of us teachers, and as competent as anybody to testify in this case; and I venture to say there is not one among us who has not observed, in students who have pursued widely different studies, a corresponding difference in general aptitude. It does not stand to reason that algebra should develop the same faculties as freehand drawing or Greek the same as blacksmithing. Probably the greatest divergence in the educational value of studies is due to the varying degree to which they require concentration, judgment, observation, and imagination. Some occupations can be pursued with tolerable success while the mind is wandering; others, like arithmetic and algebra, demand close and constant attention. Some can be carried on by an almost mechanical process; others, like Greek and Latin, call for continual reasoning and the application of general principles to particular cases. Some exact little of the mind, but much of the eye. Some, restricted to practical realities, make no appeal to the aesthetic sense; others, such as literature, native or foreign, tend to develop the imagination while awakening appreciation of the beautiful. This, I know, is old-fashioned doctrine; but until we have conclusive evidence to offset our own observation and that of all our ancestors, we shall do well to foster the studies most conducive to the habits we wish to cultivate.

The fallacy just defined is closely related to another, which it has been used to support: namely, the doctrine that all study must be made agreeable to the student. More and more the difficult subjects have been replaced by easier ones, and these have been made easier yet by

the extraction of obstacles and the invention of painless methods. Grammarless modern languages, delatinized Latin, simplified mathematics omit the very features that make study valuable. Predigested foods of all sorts have almost deprived our youth of the power to use their own teeth. Amusement is looked for, rather than instruction. "Snap" courses have, indeed, been seriously defended on the ground that even though they teach nothing tangible, they confer an indefinable something that is better than knowledge. I would not deny that contact with a superior mind may serve as an inspiration; it reveals unsuspected possibilities of culture, and moves the responsive lad to emulation. But if the responsive lad does not follow this impulse, if he wilfully neglects a recognized opportunity, he loses more than he gains. He has begun the acquisition of a vicious habit which will make it harder for him, the next time, to obey the call of duty. We shall not be far wrong in saying that a student who puts nothing into a course gets nothing out of it; and what he gets, in education as in trade, is proportionate to what he gives. We often hear, particularly from those who are not over-successful in imparting information, attractive discourse about "building character." Character is built by effort from within, not by admired but unheeded eloquence externally applied. We are every now and then called upon to admire the self-educated man. But every educated man is self-educated. Our minds as well as our characters are shaped by what we do ourselves, not by what others do for us. The chief benefit of education lies in the effort it demands. If school is to be a preparation for life, it must train the child for the performance of the duties that life has in store for him; it must develop in him the habit of cheerfully and regularly accomplish-

ing irksome tasks. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" is the law of life, and a wholesome law it is. "The joy of work" is a noble phrase, and an excellent maxim if properly understood; but the joy of work must not be confounded with the joy of self-indulgence. In self-indulgence the joy comes first, the pleasure is mainly one of anticipation; and gloom is apt to follow after. Work, for most people, is self-denial; and in self-denial the conditions are reversed: it is the beginning that is painful, and joy comes with the fulfillment. This joy may be far greater than that of self-indulgence, but it is remote from the chooser, who is likely to see only the preliminary pain. It is natural for all of us since Adam's fall — and particularly for the inexperienced — to choose the immediate pleasure; and this innate tendency it is the business of education to counteract.

"We do not value Knowledge, but Power," shout the educational Cubists, who apparently would make a man foursquare with nothing inside. We must no longer teach a lad that  $7 \times 8 = 56$ : that is simply knowledge. Let him be aware that somewhere in the library there is a book called an algebra, geometry, or something of the sort, in which such tiresome facts are tabulated: that is Power. When I was a child, we used to write in our copy-books, "Knowledge is Power"; that maxim was held up to us as the fundamental principle of education. And so it is! Furthermore, it holds good for all life, not for school alone. Knowledge is not only the greatest but almost the only source of human power. What makes the success of our captains of industry? Clear, full, accurate information concerning the industries to be captained, together with sufficient imagination to conceive audacious plans for capturing them. The same combination of keen imagination



with well-nigh exhaustive knowledge in many fields made Napoleon great among generals and statesmen. Among savages, who is the ruler? The Medicine-Man, the only one who knows. I have been told that even among prize-fighters the best is he who knows most of the art of sparring. Of course, knowledge, like anything else, to be valuable must be ready for use. We hear, in fact, a great deal of lamentation over the student crammed full of knowledge which he cannot employ. In the lack of a living specimen, let us assume the potential existence of a student thus crammed. We may go so far as to admit that it is quite within the range of possibility for a man to possess knowledge for which he will never have any occasion, and also knowledge which he will be unable to utilize when a suitable occasion shall present itself. On the other hand, one thing is certain: a man who does not possess knowledge cannot use it under any circumstances. Our only chance of success lies in acquiring knowledge — as much of it as we can get — and keeping it well dusted, well labeled, well classified. We shall never gain power from vague discourse about unknown or unassimilated facts. What constitutes power? To a certain extent, strength of will. So far as that is a product of education, it can be developed only by the systematic overcoming of obstacles, by resolutely doing the things that lead to the achievement of our object, whether we like them or not. Aside from will force, power consists in the ability to make swift and accurate comparisons and deductions. But this is manifestly impossible, if we do not know the terms to be compared and the data from which inferences are to be drawn. It is only by dealing with definite truths that judgment can be trained.

Now to retain these truths, to keep them clear and correct, what we need above all is memory. And memory

(alas!) is even more discredited than knowledge. It is, indeed, scarcely ever called by its simple name, being customarily cited, in alliterative disparagement, as "mere memory." The criticism of instruction that we oftenest hear nowadays is that school children are "stuffed with facts," to the detriment of Power. I should like to know what these facts are. For nearly thirty years I have been vainly trying to find some of them. The conclusion has been forced upon me that this denunciation is a heritage from a more primitive age, when children really were taught facts, and when memory was not left in an embryonic state. The truth is that memory and imagination, the two most important human faculties, are scarcely cultivated at all. There was a time when mnemonic exercises were in vogue, when the development of a quick, sure, retentive memory was thought to be one of the principal duties of the schoolmaster. That time has gone by; and the disastrous results of its passing are everywhere apparent. It is pitiful to see the agonies that the ordinary college student has to suffer, if he is obliged to learn anything outright. It is amazing to see how readily he forgets the things which he is told and which, for the moment, he apparently understands. What is the use of all our endless lecturing, of our long assignments of "outside reading," if the pupil's mind retains nothing but confused and mainly erroneous impressions? Memory is, indeed, the very basis of all knowledge, and therefore of nearly all human power. The main difference between a wise man and a fool is that the one remembers, the other forgets. And memory, unlike some of our attributes, depends largely upon training for its efficiency.

The great tragic poet Alfieri has described his experience at the Academy of Turin as "eight years of unedu-

cation." "Uneducation," a natural fruit of our present pedagogical theories, is perhaps the principal cause of our intellectual darkness. Only when the educator shall have been educated, the air cleared of noxious fallacies, and a sound and virile conception of learning restored, will the reign of Humbug come to an end. Not until then will light begin to dawn on our Dark Ages.

## VII

### NEW ENGLAND PRONUNCIATION

MEN go about, says St. Augustine, to wonder at seas and waves and mountains and rivers and ocean and stars, when they might find so much more that is worthy of study in themselves. Ofttimes the hunter after foreign tongues is only half conscious of his native language; often he is far more interested in the sounds and idioms of French or Spanish than in those which fall from his own lips. The speech that I am about to discuss has the disadvantages as well as the advantage of familiarity. Those things which are always about us, while they are the easiest to observe with accuracy, are the ones that least arrest our attention. Only by comparison with things more remote do they fully show themselves to us. The moss-covered bucket of our childhood, indelibly stamped though it be on the memory, is devoid of poetic charm — indeed, of any significance — until experience contrasts it with urban plumbing.

The moss-covered dialect which distant linguistic wanderings have revealed to me is my own. It is one of my earliest possessions, one of my first vehicles of expression. Every cultivated man has at least two dialects. When James Russell Lowell returned from the court of St. James his speech was unmistakably British; but he had not forgotten the ways of Biglow, and he was doubtless master of several intermediate fashions. I am inclined to believe that even savages make some distinction between a ceremonious and a workaday style. The son of an African

chief recently told me that in his tribe, whose language has never been reduced to writing, there were certain professional rhetoricians, orators capable of holding a crowd for hours in open-mouthed admiration by their polished diction. The children whom as a small child I knew had a grown-up idiom for their elders, an unconstrained one for their comrades. For my own part, though essentially a city boy, I was nearly as much at home in the country, where most of my relatives lived and where I spent a good deal of my time. I spoke, therefore, three dialects: adult urban, infantile urban, and rural — the last acquired not only in eastern, central, and western Massachusetts, but also in New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Later I added two others — the fashionable Boston style then known as “West End” and the language of some British playmates who were my companions during a sojourn in Germany.

When we speak of New England pronunciation, we generally have in mind, no doubt, the country rather than the city usage, the former having remained more distinctively local, the latter having been modified by race mixture and by inter-urban communication. In twentieth century Boston, the bulk of the population is of Irish descent and keeps to some extent its Irish accent; the ordinary Yankees use a mitigated Yankee speech shorn of its most conspicuous Yankeeisms; the upper circles and those who aspire thereto are apt to favor a pronunciation derived, it would seem, from that which prevailed in England a couple of generations ago. Most interesting, of course, is the usage that has most flavor of the soil.

In one respect all American dialects are surprisingly alike, and no less surprisingly different from the speech of the mother country; I mean in intonation. Again and again,



in the streets of a foreign city, I have caught from a passing pair a little fragment of an English phrase, often without distinguishing the words; and scarcely ever could I doubt whether the speaker was an American or an Englishman. Aside from differences in the quality of voice (the British being generally more sonorous), tone sequences clearly indicate the side of the Atlantic from which they come. Our utterance is slow and monotonous, our variations in pitch are of small compass, we are greatly addicted to very slight rising-falling-rising inflections. We seem to be holding ourselves in. The Englishman, on the other hand, seems to be singing full-throated. To my ear, the British intonations are today the most beautiful I know in any language. I say "today" because they have changed notably within my recollection. They must have been more or less consciously cultivated, much as a song-bird studies its tune. All highly developed forms of utterance are studiously acquired, the "tough" jargon of the East Side no less than the dainty discourse of the Four Hundred. Inasmuch as Canadian, Australian, and, I think, South African inflections are closer to ours than to those of England, it is likely that we represent the earlier type, from which the insular Britons, by concerted aesthetic endeavor, have departed. Can it be that the music of birds first developed in similar fashion?

Among Americans, I believe we New Englanders, though less drawly than the South, are fondest of the double circumflex accent with a compass of less than half a tone, which we often use at the end of a sentence, leaving an impression of mental reservation. You may remember the man in black, who *seemed* to be as fine a man as ever Artemus Ward set eyes on, and who accosted that genial showman on a railway train. "It's a fine day," said the

stranger. " ' Middlin,' ses I, not wishin to commit myself; ' it's a middlin fine day.' " Our American utterance in general appears to be characterized by an unwillingness to commit ourselves. Now, Artemus Ward may have said either " mîddlîn," with a falling-rising, or " mîddlîn'," with rising-falling-rising effect. The former is the more guarded; it is markedly distrustful. The second is the normal Yankee inflection, and expresses nothing more than habitual precaution against the reactions of a malignant and ever-watchful Providence.

Intonations deserve more study. Although they form the most important element in the acquisition of what is called " a good accent," they are scarcely ever mentioned in guides to pronunciation. No matter how correct be one's production of individual units, the whole thing sounds bad if the tune is wrong. Inflections can best be learned by echoing phrase after phrase as it leaves the teacher's mouth. Hard to discuss they obviously are, because we have no means of portraying them. Even a musical notation will not do, their intervals being different from those of the scale. They can be imitated on the violin, but not on the piano. Perhaps their notes could be adjusted to some oriental mode that recognizes minute intervals; but these modes, I believe, are not written. I have sometimes tried to fix intonations graphically on coördinate paper — that is, paper ruled into little squares. Letting the height of each of these squares stand for a half-tone, I have represented the constantly gliding pitch of speech by a consecutive wavy line crossing the sheet and traversing the squares at the appropriate places.

The difficulty of notation exists also, though by no means to the same degree, for the separate sounds of language. I can pronounce a dialect vowel so that the hearer may catch

and reproduce it; but how shall I write it? There are, to be sure, excellent phonetic alphabets; none, however, can be trusted to indicate all shades of difference; nor can the general reader be trusted to decipher an esoteric script. As to our ordinary spelling, it is hopeless, at least as far as vowels are concerned. Our letters are like wax faces whose features have been so rubbed off that they suggest no one person more than another. To return to Artemus Ward, it may be recalled that he could give to one of his waxwork figures at will "a benevolent or a fiendish look." Even so our overworked letters, expressing nothing in particular, may register any expression. If I write *u*, who shall tell whether I mean the vowel of *duty*, of *brute*, of *put*, of *but*, of *curl* — not to speak of the noun *minute*? This unfortunate type is like Full Private James in one of Gilbert's *Bab Ballads*:

No characteristic trait had he  
Of any distinctive kind.

And his fellows are no better. I suppose the archaisms that encrust us must be sloughed off one by one. We have got the Arabic numerals; we have got an intelligible method of writing music; we are getting the metric system; some day we shall invent an orthography. I believe that among my various reasons for disliking the present English spelling, the strongest of all is an aesthetic one. Adaptation to purpose is a fundamental principle of beauty in useful things; and our writing is about as well adapted to representing our speech as a flint knife is adapted to shaving. The hideous clumsiness of our spelling exasperates me even more than its inadequacy.

What are some of the things we should like to represent? Let us consider first the three principal diphthongs, to wit, the combinations *ou* as in *out*, *oi* as in *oil*, *i* as in *ice*. So

great is the mental confusion induced by English orthography that many educated persons, even some teachers of diction, are unaware and can hardly be convinced that *i* is as much a diphthong as *ou* and *oi*. Its first element is generally the *a* of *father*, its second is approximately the *i* of *pin*; but, as is always the case with English diphthongs, the transition is gradual, one vowel melting into the other. Such is its composition in the standard speech of most of the United States today, although some speakers here, as in England, begin it with the *a* of *fat* rather than with that of *father*. In Benjamin Franklin's time the first part was the vowel of *but*, and this pronunciation was recommended as late as 1840 by Samuel Willard (the author of the *Franklin Primer* and *Reader*) in his *General Class-Book*, published in Greenfield, Mass. It still survives sporadically, oftenest after a *p* or a *b*, as in *pine*, *spider*, *buy*, all of which I have heard. However, the modern pronunciation was prescribed in 1789 by Noah Webster. In Schuyler Clark's *American Linguist*, issued in Providence in 1830, we read that the word *mine* is equivalent to *ma in* in the sentence "is ma in?" Most of us have heard, no doubt, from elderly people, a pronunciation of such words as *kind*, *sky*, *guide* with a *y* consonant interposed between the *k* or *g* and the *i*: *kyind*, etc. This was the practice of James Freeman Clarke; it was also that of my father, who, however, was not a New Englander. It was fashionable in the latter eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, though promptly condemned by Webster.

*Oi* in New England, as elsewhere, is usually made up of the vowel of *law* plus that of *in* — *loin*. Throughout the eighteenth century, here and in the whole English-speaking world, *oi* and *i* were very generally confused, both being pronounced, in all probability, as they now are by the Irish.

Lists of words identical in sound regularly contained, as late as 1822, such pairs as *boil bile*, *enjoin engine*, *foil file*, *point pint*, *toil tile*. Fraser's *Columbian Monitor* in 1794 drops into verse on the subject, as follows:

The sound of *o i* custom reconciles  
With that of *i* spoke long: as, witness toils.

By 1795, however, Boston had taken alarm, as appears from the *Columbian Grammar* of Benjamin Dearborn, which condemns "bile" and "brile" as "improprieties." The milder Samuel Willard calls "ile" for *oil*, "pint" for *point*, "line" for *loin* "very old fashioned." They still flourish, nevertheless, though now sunk to very lowly estate, among Yankees and Englishmen alike. A recent development is the separation of *oi* into two syllables, making *soil*, for instance, into "so ill." This I have heard of late from many schoolchildren, perhaps in an exaggerated reaction against "sile."

*Ou* has two pronunciations, according as the first element is the *a* of *father* or the *a* of *fat* — "hah-oose" or "hä-oose"; the former, in New England, is urban, the latter is rural. This is not the case everywhere: in Baltimore, in Philadelphia, in southern England, the *ä-oo* type has no suggestion of rusticity. A variant of it consists in the insertion of a *y* consonant before the diphthong, "kä-oo" (*cow*) becoming "kyä-oo." Webster in 1789 tells us that *ou*, especially after *p* and *c*, is often improperly sounded "iou," as "kiow," "piower," although *ground*, *round*, etc., are pronounced "with tolerable propriety" by "the most awkward countryman." I have myself observed no such distinction: the people of my acquaintance who say "kä-oo" or "kyä-oo" say also "grä-oond." In the times of Franklin and of Webster, the proper sound of *ou* appears to have been not *ah-oo* but *o-oo*, with *o* as in *poet*



— “*ro-oond*,” and not “*rah-oond*.” My father, when reading aloud, said “*ro-oond*”: he was bred in Philadelphia, and I conjecture that in his childhood he had been corrected for saying “*ră-oond*.” Samuel Willard would have us pronounce “*raw-oond*.” “Many persons,” he says, “give to the *o* in this diphthong the Italian sound of *a* in *car*: and what is unspeakably worse, many others give it a flat sound, as in *care*.” He adds careful directions for the pronunciation of *cow*. The *Biglow Papers* show regularly “*kyă-oo*” or “*kă-oo*.” Before leaving this diphthong, I may note that one sometimes hears nowadays the *ou* of *out* and *about* pronounced *ŭ-oo*, with *u* as in *but* — which, unless the speaker has Southern characteristics, is a sign that he comes from Canada.

We shall now pass to the so-called “long vowels,” *ā*, *ē*, *ō*, *ōō*, as in *bait*, *beat*, *boat*, *boot*. In reality, these sounds, in New England as in Old England, are not pure vowels; they do not end as they begin, for the passage in the mouth or at the lips is narrowing from start to finish. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that standard English has no pure long vowels: we apparently cannot keep our organs still during a protracted utterance. *Bait* begins like *bet*; *beet* begins like *bit*; *boot* starts its vowel like that of *put*. That is why it is so hard for us to acquire the long vowels of other languages. This breaking of the vowel is not very ancient. In the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, people said *bait*, *beet*, *boat*, *boot* with pure vowels, that of *bait* being open until about the last quarter of the eighteenth century, then apparently close, the others being close all the time. The earliest mention of the diphthongization I have been able to find is by our friend Samuel Willard, who declares explicitly: “*O* begins with a sound, which is never heard alone, except in the New England pronunci-

ation of such words, as *whole*, *home*, *stone*, which they pronounce shorter than *hole*, *comb*, *bone*," and ends with *oo* as in *do*; the *a* of *cane* begins with the *e* of *men* and ends with the *e* of *me*. Follen's *Practical Grammar of the German Language*, Boston, 1831, informs us that German *e* is "nearly like *a* in *fate*, yet closer, and without the sound of an *e* which is slightly heard at the end of a long *a* in English." We may assume that the breaking of *o* and *a*, and probably of *e* and *oo*, was completed in New England by 1820 or thereabouts. In *e* and *oo* the diphthongal quality is less noticeable than in *o* and *a*. In Old England, *ō* and *ā* went on developing, with a final result of *ou* and *ī* in Cockney usage, *coat* becoming "cout" (in rime with *scout*) and *lady* becoming "lydy." Elegant speech, stopping short on the way to "cout," favored a form that begins like *curt* and ends like *coat*. This latter type has been extensively copied by people of fashion in Boston and some other New England cities. *Lady*, in cultivated circles, has never yielded to "lydy." The vulgar forms "lydy" and "pyper," however, have to some extent invaded the vocabulary of Boston street boys. It is interesting to note that the rural "dreen" for *drain* is registered in 1795; and that in 1789 our Yankee ancestors said "desate," "consate," "resate," for *conceit*, etc.

When one of these vowels is followed by *r*, it tends to drop down in the scale, especially if the *r* is the final sound, as in *pore*, or stands before a consonant, as in *port*. The effort to articulate the *r* has prevented the tongue from reaching the height required for the clear vowel. In words like *for*, *short*, the fall occurred centuries ago; here the vowel is that of *law*. In *pore*, *port*, the decline is more recent, and usage still varies between the *o* of *poet* and vowel of *paw*. The latter has prevailed in England, where

*pore* is now "paw" and *port* is "pawt"; it is rapidly gaining in our region, where "po-a" and "po-ut" are succumbing, especially in cities, to "paw-a" and "paw-ut." Our southern states solved the difficulty in a different way, by keeping the *o* and suppressing the *r*, with "po" and "pote" as a result. The *e*, as in *fear*, *beard*, has not declined so low; it has usually remained at the stage of the *i* in *fit*. In 1789, by the way, Webster condemned "beerd" and approved "baird" for *beard*; in my childhood I heard elderly people say "Blue-Baird." In England, very commonly, a curious phenomenon has occurred: the accent has been shifted from the main vowel, *i*, to the obscure vowel that takes the place of the *r*, so that *fear*, *fearing* become "fyah," "fyahring," "fyah" being similar to German *ja* with *f* prefixed. Our Southerners often do nearly the same thing, pronouncing *here* as "hyuh" or as "yuh." New England has not been involved in this shift. As for *a*, as in *pare*, *pared*, it has in general kept the value which *a* regularly had in the seventeenth century, namely, the sound of *a* in *pan*, or something very near it. Sometimes it has, instead, the eighteenth century value of  $\bar{a}$ , which is that of *e* in *pen*. In this matter the differences appear to be individual rather than geographic. For *care*, *cards*, *chair*, *share* the rustic Yankee in 1795 said "keer," "keerds," "cheer," "sheer." Passing finally to *oo*, as in *poor*, we find that this vowel is peculiarly sensitive to the neighborhood of an *r*. First it drops to the vowel of *put*, at which stage it remains in most words and in most regions; but it easily descends further to *o*, *poor* becoming "pore," which in the South is clipped to "po"; occasionally it slips down to *aw*, and *poor*, *pore*, *paw* are all merged in "paw." This last slip is pretty common in England when the vowel in question is preceded by a *y* consonant;

the word *your* is indeed very often "yaw-a" or "yaw" even in New England. In the old country an unwritten *y*, as in *pure*, *furious*, produces the same effect, and we hear "pyaw," "fyawrious." *Sure*, which once began with *sy* and not, as at present, with *sh*, often turns up as "shore" and "shaw." "Shore" for *sure* is listed by Dearborn in Boston in 1795 as an "impropriety."

If the *r* is immediately followed by a vowel, it is less effective as a modifier. *Era*, *hour*i waver between the close and the open, the sounds of *eat*, *hoot* on the one hand and those of *it*, *hook* on the other; the former prevail in America, including New England, the latter in the mother country. When we come to *a* and *o*, as in *vary* and *story*, the difference is more marked: on the west side of the Atlantic we generally hear "vāry," "stōry," on the east side "vää-ry," "staw-ry." To the British ear our pronunciation of *Mary* is peculiarly painful.

Of the four "long vowels" which we have been discussing, two are in some cases subject to abbreviation, accompanied by a relaxation of tongue and lips, giving an opener sound: these are *oo* and *o*, the two that are made in the back of the mouth. Between long *oo*, as in *boot*, and short *oo*, as in *hook*, the demarcation is not very clear, and some words are continually flitting to and fro across the frontier. The short vowel, in *broom*, *cooper*, *hoof*, *proof*, *roof*, *room*, *root*, *soon*, *soot*, etc., goes back to the eighteenth century, but probably was regarded until recently as a vulgarity. Dearborn in 1795 condemns "huff, ruff, spunfull," as he spells them. I think that in all the instances above cited the short vowel prevails in New England. *Soot* of course is still more commonly pronounced "süt," riming with *but*. Although there are regional preferences concerning these words, it is impossible to trace geographic limits.

The shortening of *o*, on the other hand, is almost wholly confined to New England, although I have heard *suppose* with the Yankee short *o* from the lips of an orator from South Carolina. In his *Dissertations on the English Language*, 1789, Noah Webster says: "*O* is sometimes shortened in common parlance, as in *coll.*" Hale, in his *English Spelling-Book*, Northampton, 1799, observes: "The short sound of *o* is found in too few words to make a distinct class: they are *home*, *none*, *stone*, *whole*, and their compounds." We should now remove from the list *none*, which is regularly "nun." Dearborn's "Improprieties," 1795, include something that he spells "hum." I have already quoted Willard's reference to "the New England pronunciation of such words, as *whole*, *home*, *stone*, which they pronounce shorter than *hole*, *comb*, *bone*." Of present cultivated New England usage it may be said that some fifty common words have the shortened vowel, while many more have it in rustic speech. Why it should appear in some words, and not in others which seem to offer the same conditions, I cannot tell. One hears it in *bone*, *stone*, but seldom in *alone* and never in *groan*, *moan*, *tone*. It is well-nigh universal in *whole*, but is never heard in *coal*, *hole*, *mole*, *roll*, *shoal*, *soul*, *toll*; *goal* does not come into consideration, since its only popular form is "gool" or "gools." The most extensive category is probably that in *t*: *boat*, *coat*, *note*, *throat*, *wrote*; but even here I have never been able to locate *goat* or *float*. The *d* list — *load*, *road*, *toad* — is more consistent. I think that even in city parlance the short vowel predominates in *both*, *folks*, *Holmes*, *most*, *only*, *Polk*, *polka*, *whole* and its derivatives. Colonel T. W. Higginson used the short *o* in *Holmes*. Whether the Autocrat himself so pronounced his name I have never heard. There are probably differences in the degree of prevalence in the



several states: I associate *boat* more particularly with Maine; *road*, *stone*, *toad* with Massachusetts; but this may be accident. *Home* and *whole* are general favorites. Now, what is the vowel under consideration? Is it simply an *o* cut short? Not quite, though very nearly; it has a more open effect. Our *coat* tends toward French *cotte*; but the latter, in Paris, is nearer to my pronunciation of *curt*, much shortened. The sound, to describe it exactly, is the "short *u*" labialized. Pronounce *hum* with the narrowed lip aperture of *roam*, and you get New England *home*. Thus *but* may be turned to *boat*, *cut* to *coat*, *hull* to *whole*, *stun* to *stone*. Dialect writers, having no better way of indicating the sound, have spelled "but," "cut," "hull," "hum," "stun," and so on; and outsiders have imagined that the vowel was really *ũ*. Actors especially, in rural drama, have "hummed" and "butted" and "ludded" in a way I have never known off the stage. "Hum" is, however, not entirely mythical: it exists in some regions in Connecticut; and I am told that it may be found in Vermont, although I never heard it there. James Russell Lowell once told me that he had never heard it at all.

The other long vowels, *ē* and *ā*, are seldom shortened in our dialects. "Crick" for *creek* is, of course, common everywhere. The past participle of *be* is always "bin" or "ben." "Nekked" for *naked* is prevalent in New England and perhaps elsewhere. I have heard "sneck" for *snake* in Massachusetts. *Ate* is still generally pronounced "et," but perhaps this is a different phenomenon.

With the sound, or group of sounds, called "long *u*" we enter upon a difficult and complicated subject. Let us confine ourselves, for the present, to accented syllables. Here the "long *u*" has three distinct values, which we may call *yoo*, *ee-oo*, and *oo*. Of these, *yoo* and *ee-oo* are local or

individual variants of the same type, while *oo* is a substitute for both. As far as Franklin's usage is recorded by himself, we find that he said "fee-oo" for *few*, but "noo," "rool," "troo"; after *n* and *r*, then, he used the *oo* substitute. Webster's practice was quite different. According to his *Dissertations*, "long *u*" invariably had one and the same sound, which was neither *oo* nor a diphthong, but "a separate vowel, which has no affinity to any other sound in the language," and is best pronounced by countrymen and children; in *new*, he declares, no *e* is heard, except in Virginia, where they affect to say "nee-oo," "fee-oo." The Virginian, it is to be noted, unlike Franklin, treated *few* and *new* alike. What Webster's mysterious vowel was, I cannot say; it would seem, however, that in his Connecticut speech something like the old *y* (French *u* or German *ü*) was still in rural use. This sound, presumably foreign to Franklin's Boston tongue, was, I think, tolerably widespread among New England rustics, and led to the later confusion of *oo* and *ee-oo*, as exemplified in "dooty" and "skewl." "Grim-visaged waw," writes Lowell, "heth smeuthed his wrinkled front," and capers "To the lascivious pleasin' of a loot." Perry, of Edinburgh, calls for "long *u*" — whatever that may mean — in *June*, *luce*, *prune*, *ruse*, *spruce*, *strew*, *sure*, *truce*, *truth*, *yew*, and also, it would seem, in *presume*, *true*. Walker, on the other hand, distinguishes *tune*, "tyoon," from *rude*, "rood," for which he was taken to task by Webster in 1806. It seems evident that the obscure counsels of Webster and Perry (whose *Only Sure Guide to the English Tongue* was early and frequently reprinted in Worcester, Mass.) were misunderstood by later orthoëpists and led to heroic attempts to pronounce *yoo* or *ee-oo* after all consonants, but especially after dentals, where they were favored also by Walker.

The resultant confusion perhaps did much to mix up *oo* and *ee-oo* in the rural dialect. This mixing is already evident in Jonathan Ware's representation of Vermont speech in 1814, where "dew" for *do* and "tew" for *two* appear beside "trooth," "hooman," "redoosing," "obskoor," "noomerator," "dootee," "dispooted," "constitooshun." The confusion between *oo* and *ee-oo* was probably at its height about 1820. At present the usage in New England is as follows. At the beginning of a word, or after *h*, we say *yoo*: as in *union*, *hue*. After the labials (*p*, *b*, *m*), the denti-labials (*f*, *v*), the velar consonants (*k*, *g*), city people usually say *yoo*, country people *ee-oo*: so *pew*, *beauty*, *muse*; *few*, *view*; *cue*, *Gulick*. After all sorts of dentals (*t*, *d*, *n*, *th*, *l*, *s*, *z*) both city and country people who speak according to nature say *oo*, while those who speak by the book say *ee-oo*, occasionally *yoo*: examples are *tune*, *due*, *new*, *thews*, *lute*, *sue*, *resume*. After other consonants (*r*, *sh*, *zh*, *y*, also *l* preceded by another consonant) *oo* is the rule, but rustics often use *ee-oo*: so *rule*, *sure*, *juice*, *yew*, *blue*. Survivals of the old confusion are the still current "amoosin," "pecooliar," and "lugoobrious." There used to be a popular song called "Werry Pecooliar," whose unhappy author had been "a great thlave" to the "mighty god Coopid." On the other hand, "skewl" for *school*, and "dew" for *do*, and "tew" for *to* or *two* may still be heard in the country. The rural fondness for *ee-oo* is not "pecooliar" to New England. In Miss Burney's *Camilla* a company of miscellaneous players attempts a performance of *Othello*, each actor sticking to his own local pronunciation; and the one from Norfolk declaims: "The Deuk dew greet yew, General." The most characteristic feature of New England usage is the prevalence of *oo* after dentals, which, as we have seen, goes back as far as Franklin. "Noo,"

"dooty," "stoodent," "loot," "soo," "prezoom" are constantly heard among us, even from expert public speakers. In fact, they are fairly prevalent throughout the North. Professor Gildersleeve once gave me an entertaining account of the strange linguistic mixture caused by the importation of "noo" pronunciations, by the Yankee schoolmistress, into the dialect of the youthful negro, who nowadays may be heard uttering such anomalies as "Ahz gwahn home awn *Toozdy*." Sometimes the *y*, which the prudent Yankee prefers to omit, has surreptitiously combined with the *t* or *d*, turning *tune* to "choon," *duty* to "jooty." These pronunciations are described by Webster, in 1789, as common but undesirable; they are not used here at present, except by the Irish. So it is with "shoot" for *suit*, "rezhoom" for *resume*, in which the *y* has combined with *s* or *z*.

When the *u* is unstressed, and follows an accented syllable, the combination of its *y* element with a preceding *t*, *d*, *s*, or *z* is unchecked by any sense of "jooty," and we get "nacher," "verjer," "ishoo," "plezher," "sichawashun," "ejacate," the *oo* being generally reduced, or nearly reduced, to the status of a neutral vowel. Inasmuch as "nacher" and "nachoor" are expressly condemned by Perry and by Webster, these pronunciations must have been current in the second half of the eighteenth century; how much earlier they existed, I do not know. Walker advocates "feecher." According to Samuel Kirkham's *English Grammar*, published in the first part of the nineteenth century, the *d* in *educate*, *grandeur*, *verdure* is to be sounded as *j*. Samuel Willard informs us that "*tu*, in the syllable following the accent, has a sound resembling that of *chu*, as in *nature*, *virtuous*," and that the *d* in *assiduous* has "very nearly the sound of *j*." Beside this usage there

has existed from early times another, which entirely suppresses the *y*. In 1643 Richard Hodges published in London *A Special help to orthographie*, wherein we find *commune* pronounced like *common*, *ordure* like *order*, *pasture* like *pastor*, *tenure* like *tenor*, *venture* as *venter*. Benjamin Franklin said "natteral." While Perry condemns "nater," Isaiah Thomas in 1785 (*New American Spelling-Book*, Worcester, Mass.) declares that *century* is pronounced like *sentry*. Presently *The Young Ladies' and Gentlemen's Spelling-Book* identifies phonetically *capture* with *captor*, *culture* with *coulter*, *feature* with *fetor*, *gesture* with *jester*. Jonathan Ware's Vermont forms, in 1814, betray the same confusion that they showed in the case of accented *u*: our common mother appears as "naychoor," "nacher," and "nater"; "kreetyoor," "figyur," and "vurtu" (i. e., "vurtew") stand side by side with "vallooming," "misfourtings," "unokkoopied," "kontinoos," "sitooation," "kontribbited," and, in another category, "absoloot." A little later, J. A. Cummings's *Pronouncing Spelling-Book*, printed in Boston, admits no difference between *capture* and *captor*, *value* and *valley*. This practice has not died out, but is now distinctively rural and old-fashioned, save in a few words, such as "contribbit," "critter," "ockipy," "vallible," which may be heard anywhere among the socially unelect. An elderly Provincetown skipper, when questioned about his health, may still reply: "I barly continner." Meanwhile Perry and Webster, with their insistence on a cryptic "long *u*" under all circumstances, have beguiled some of their uncritical followers into the invention of such forms as "nate-your," "verd-your," "iss-you," "as-your," which, however, have not found acceptance in good society.

The comparatively modern vowels exemplified in *cut* and



*cur* offer no striking local characteristics. The "short *u*" is, indeed, apt to be carried further back in the mouth in the state of Maine than it is elsewhere, and sounds a little like *ah*, so that *sculpin* to a Massachusetts ear almost suggests "scahlpin." The New England *cur* is, of course, a bob-tailed one, inasmuch as it has no *r*; whereas the Middle Westerner is in such a hurry to get to his *r* that he runs it into the preceding vowel, pronouncing the *u* and the *r* simultaneously. The British *cur* is as *r*-less as ours, but has a more open sound, considerably resembling our *car*. For such a word as *first*, we distinguish London "fahst, Boston "fuhst," Chicago "furst," and New York "fuh-eest." *Heard* obviously stands apart: as Webster tells us in 1789, this word was "heerd" in New England before the Revolution, but since that event fashionable people have imitated the British "hurd"; at present, of course, "heerd" is very rural.

With regard to *ah* and *ă*, New England is on the side of the old country and at variance with all the rest of her own, except a part of Virginia. I have discussed this subject elsewhere, and shall not now go into details. Like the vowels of *cut* and *cur*, our modern *ah* is a new sound, which developed out of *ă* in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Before *r* — unless the *r* was itself followed by a vowel — the eighteenth century *ă* changed to *ah* both in England and in all the United States: *căr*, *cărt*, *cărter* became "cahr," "cahrt," "cahrter"; then, in Old and New England, "cah," "caht," "cahta"; while *cărry* kept its short vowel. The split in usage came not here, but in cases — about one hundred and fifty of them — in which the next consonant was not *r*, but a fricative (*f*, *s*, or *th*), an *ns* or *nt*, or an *lm*: such words as *half*, *laugh*, *pass*, *past*, *path*; *dance*, *advantage*, *branch*, *can't*, *Nahant*; *calm*, *psalm* — most of which the

Yankee naturally pronounces with *ah* if they belong to his everyday vocabulary. *Can't* always has *ah*, but the less familiar *cant*, the noun, has *ă*. *Pantry* took an *ah*, but *pant* apparently came too late. "Commahnd," "demahnd," lying just outside the *nt* category, are not uncommon. The "Italian *a*" is most constant among farmers, less stable among city people, whose convictions have been shaken by contact with the Irish and also by the school teacher, who has often insisted on a compromise vowel. With our rustics the *ah* became such a favorite that it was extended to all sorts of words outside our classes — words like *apple*, *hammer*, *handsome*, *matter*, *Saturday*, which even now sometimes retain the broad vowel. The fashion seems to have been at its height between 1830 and 1850. The *aun* words, such as *laundry*, *launch*, *jaunt*, generally take *ah* in New England; and so does *aunt*, which is rather emancipated from the group. The conflict between *ah* and *ă* is the most prolific source of enmity between East and West. To the Easterner, the *ă* smacks of interminable flatlands; to the Westerner, the *ah* seems a sonorous affectation. It should be added that the "broad *a*" of New Englanders, Italianate though we be, is not so broad as that of Old England and of most of the United States. Our *grass* really lies between the "grahs" of a British lawn and the "grăss" of the boundless prairies.

Another pair of vowels is responsible for much disagreement, though not a source of hostility. Shall we say "öff" or "awf," "dög" or "dawg," "lörg" or "lawng," "ön" or "awn?" The two sounds that come into competition, the vowel of *lot* and the vowel of *law*, are generally regarded as the short and the long of one and the same type of *o*; and so they are, approximately, in England, where both *law* and *lot* are pronounced with the lips somewhat rounded,

the aperture being smaller for *law* than for *lot*. In America the rounding of the lips for the sounds has disappeared, except in New England (especially Maine), which keeps a trace of it; the change seems to have occurred about a century ago. To make an American *aw*, as in *law*, one must, so to speak, swallow the tongue — that is, draw it as far back and as far down as it will go. The “short *o*” of *lot*, in the United States, has become identical, save in quantity, with the *ah* of *father*; only New England preserves the distinction, using one vowel for *hard* (“hahd”), another for “hod.” The rest of the country pronounces *hot* like German *hat*, thus introducing “Italian *a*” into a vast new category of words while refusing it admission to another. The American who scorns to say “pahst” for *past* gladly pronounces “pahd” for *pod*. Actors of the better class and trained elocutionists affect the English practice, making both *aw* and *ø* more or less round, and differentiating *ø* from *ah*. An actor who in a society rôle should say “I’ve gaht ut” for “I’ve got it” would not escape reprobation. Now, as I said, the vowels of *law* and *lot*, however they be sounded, compete for acceptance in several classes of words. In the first place, *a* and *au* before an *l* that is followed by another consonant — as in *also*, *alter*, *fault*, *scald* — have in England both pronunciations; in America they always have the sound of *law*, save that the Yankee sometimes is heard to use *ø*. It is much the same with the second class, in which an *o* (or, after *w* or *u*, an *a*) precedes a surd fricative, as in *cloth*, *lost*, *often*, *wash*; but here the Yankee *ø* is notably commoner than in the first. Before a sonant fricative or a liquid — as in *bother*, *novel*, *rosin*, *was*, and in *doll*, *horrid*, *quarrel*, *swallow* — the *aw* sound is alien to the usage of our Eastern cities, as it is to the standard speech of the old country, but is pretty

frequent in all rural America. Before a nasal (as in *long*, *on*, *romp*) or a sonant stop (as in *dog*, *God*, *squab*), the sound is in England regularly *ɔ*, while in America there is diversity: the words in *ong* (such as *long*, *strong*) always have *aw* in natural American speech, and so have *gone*, *dog*, and *doggerel*; *bog*, *fog*, *log* are almost as generally addicted to *aw*; the word *on* normally has it in the South; "Gawd" and "Gōd" are divided according to church and temperament (one man confessed to me that he employed "Gōd" in profanity, "Gawd" in prayer); the rest have in New England the short vowel, elsewhere both the short and the long. In the state of Maine certain common words have progressed — or receded, as one may choose to call it — from *aw* to *ō*: *foggy* has become "fōgy," *porgy* is identical with *pogy*, *northward* is "nōthud." So on Cape Cod the old salts say "nōthud," "nōthaly," "nōtheast," but always "naw-west." The contest between our two vowels, long and short, seems to have been going on for considerably more than a century. E. Hale's *Spelling-Book* (Northampton, 1799) prescribes *aw* in *cost*, *dross*, *frost*, *froth*, *moth*, *scald*, *soft*, *tongs*, *ɔ* in *fault*, *gone*, *halt*, *malt*, *swan*, *vault*, *wand*, *wash*.

The short vowels heard in *bit*, *bet*, *bat*, *book* are probably today very nearly what they were two hundred years ago. The first three, *ɪ*, *ɛ*, *ă*, are a little closer and a little shorter in England than in America; the difference is especially noticeable in a word like *bad*, which in the Englishman's mouth sounds to an American almost like *bed*, while the American's rendering suggests to the Englishman a prolonged bleat. In this respect New England is like the rest of the United States. The rustic substitution of *ɛ* for *ɪ*, which is so frequent in the Biglow dialect, can be traced back to the eighteenth century. Dearborn, in 1795, criti-

cizes "sense" for *since* and "sperrit" for *spirit*; Ware, in 1814, gives us "entu" for *into*; and Cummings, in 1822, mentions "desk" for *disc* and "set" for *sit*. This phonetic tendency is still alive, and may attack a new word. The state of Maine has the proud motto "Dirigo," which, as the name of a hotel, is apt to become "Derrigo." The opposite tendency manifested itself in the case of certain words during the eighteenth century, when it was fashionable to say "frind," "gineral," "git," "sildom," "yis," "yisterday." "Bliss" for *bless* is recorded also. Franklin pronounced "frind" and "git." The conservative Irish have clung to these forms; among Anglo-Saxons, "git," the sole survivor, has outlived its good renown. In present day Cockney English, *ă* turns to *ě*, and *cab, thank you* become "keb," "thank you." The Yankee has restricted this practice to a very few words, such as "hed," "hev," "hez," "kerridge," "ketch," "shell"; *can* becomes both "ken" and "kin." I once heard a schoolboy declaim: "I hev no friend or relative in the world but her; I never hed, I never shell hev." And once, at Point Allerton, a retired sea captain, entering the "settin' room" where one of his daughters was ingeniously tormenting the piano while the other with equal industry tortured her poor little voice, beamed upon the long-suffering company and sententiously remarked: "Music heth chahms." Although Franklin was not ashamed to say "hez," such forms have now grown countrified, as have "shet" for *shut*, which in Webster's day was "now becoming vulgar," and "bresh" for *brush*, "kivver" for *cover*, "sich" for *such*, and "crap," "drap" for *crop, drop*.

If the English language were left to its own devices, free from all shackles of school and spelling, it would soon have only two unaccented vowels, the two that begin *about* and



*enough*, that end *sofa* and *lady*, that stand in the middle of *probable* and *possible*. Toward these, in familiar words and in natural speech, all wholly unstressed vowels tend. And of these two, the first would greatly encroach on the second, as, in fact, it has already done, *possible* being now usually pronounced in America with the middle vowel of *probable*, *enough* with the initial vowel of *about*. The distinction between these sounds has become one of the niceties of careful diction; it is much more generally observed in New England than elsewhere in America. Particularly offensive to the ear of the old-fashioned Yankee is the same substitution in final syllables — “goodnus” for *goodness*, “ahnust” for *honest*, “nakud” for *naked*, “stahp ut” for *stop it*. When the vowel is itself the last sound of the word, the substitution does not occur, barring such isolated cases as *Missouri*. Under these circumstances, indeed, the New England rural dialect has inverted the shift, turning *sofa* to “sofy,” *soda* to “sody,” *Sarah* to “Sary.” How anciently this change was made, I cannot say. That it belongs as far back as the eighteenth century can be proved as follows. People who say “sody” for *soda* would never dream of pronouncing “betty” for “betta,” i. e., *better*. Now, since “betta,” “dippa,” “poka,” end, in New England, exactly like *soda*, *sofa*, there is no reason why the farmer should not transform them into “betty,” “dippy,” “poky,” if the tendency were still in full vigor. Therefore the active period of this tendency must antedate the fall of final *r*, which reduced *better* to “betta”; and this fall occurred not later than 1800.

Now that we are speaking of unaccented vowels we may pause to note a divergence between English and American practice. Languages, in general, are impatient of accumulations of stressless vowels. England prefers to reduce

their number by omitting the weaklings; America, by re-stressing them. Compare "difficlt" and "diffícult," "néssusry" and "nécessáry," "míltry" and "militáry," "témprully" and "témporáryly." In this last case, indeed, as in the case of *primarily*, our speakers often turn the secondary stress into the principal one. The same inclination to accent every second syllable prompts us to say "ádvocâte," "hólidáy," "Tháckeráy," rather than "ádvokit," "hólidy," "Tháckery." In this regard New England is quite American, although some of our sophisticated city folks consciously imitate the British habit. The American is more influenced than the Briton by spelling and etymology. During two summers spent near Chatham, on Cape Cod, I never heard that town called otherwise than "Chat-hăm"; so Waltham is "Walth-hăm," Concord is frequently "Con-cawd." Highland Light, near Provincetown, is in native parlance High Land Light. Webster, in 1789, complains of our susceptibility to the letter, citing as instances, in the eastern states, "native," "peert," *could* and *would* with the *l* sounded; in the middle states, "prejudice" and "practice." Readers of *Martin Chuzzlewit* recall the prevalence of "toe" for *to*; thus it was pronounced by Benjamin Franklin.

Before leaving the vowels, which, as their name indicates, are made of voice, it is fitting to say a word about their material. The American tends to vocalize with a scanty supply of breath, and to economize its outflow by keeping his mouth nearly shut. On the other hand, he is uneconomical of time, especially in the country. Partial closure of the mouth and general relaxation of the vocal apparatus produce a choked nasal resonance, which characterizes his speech. The term "nasality" is often wrongly applied to a quality suggestive of nose but the reverse of nasal, being

caused by a stoppage of the nasal passages. Real nasality I attribute to the religious temperament of the Puritans, which favored inwardness and discouraged expansion. In New England it is disappearing, with piety.

Of the consonants there are fewer things to say. Most noteworthy is the weakness of final consonants in America. While the Briton says "bitt," "bëtt," "bätt," the Yankee says "biit," "bëët," "bääät," with a prolonged vowel and an enfeebled *t*. Still feebler is the final sonant, as in *bid*, *bed*, *bad*. So weak is it that few hearers would detect its complete omission. Last winter, in the streets of South Boston, I came across two Yankees hawking wood. One had a sharp, joyous cry of "fire wood, fire wood!" while the other wailed monotonously "fire-woo', fire-woo'!" I followed their cart long enough to hear their call full fifty times, and never a *d* came from the doleful one.

Some individual consonants are worthy of mention. *H* need not detain us, since the British confusion in its use never seriously affected America, and the standard throughout the English-speaking world is virtually the same. This whole domain is familiar also with the confusion of final unaccented *ing* and *in*, often absurdly called "dropping one's *g*'s"; in reality it involves no "dropping," merely an advancement of the nasal toward the front of the mouth. "Readin," "writin," "speakin" were perfectly good British pronunciations in the eighteenth century; and "bringin," "ringin," "singin," "stingin" were preferred by many to the forms that doubled the *ing*. Franklin, however, said *ing*, and American authorities discouraged *in*. Nevertheless it flourished on this side as on the other. It is still the favorite of the rustic and the negligent urban, and not a few cultivated people in Boston and other New England cities continue to cherish it for familiar use. The

reaction against it gave rise to the odd pronunciations "capting," "certingly," "curting," "founting," "mounting," and so on. In 1795 we find stigmatized as improper "brethering," "linning," "sarting," "sovering." A literary gentleman of my acquaintance, very precise in his language, habitually says "imáging" for *imagine*.

The exchange of *v* and *w*, unlike the abuse of *h*, took hold of the eastern edge of our country. In 1789 Webster declared: "The pronunciation of *w* for *v* is a prevailing practice in England and America; it is particularly prevalent in Boston and Philadelphia. . . . Many people say *weal*, *wessel* for *veal*, *vessel*." This pronunciation, he adds, is not heard in Connecticut. In England the substitution of *w* for *v* (and, in a misdirected search for correctness, of *v* for *w*) was very general in the second half of the eighteenth century, and did not stamp the speaker as a boor. During the next fifty years it came to be regarded as a Cockney vulgarity, and now it has nearly disappeared. In America there is no trace of its former existence save in Atlantic seaports. A Boston young lady in 1794 had to be cautioned against the use of "werry" and "wessel," but early in the nineteenth century the danger must have been over. In Philadelphia, however, such pronunciations could be occasionally heard, from elderly and not necessarily ill-educated people, as late as 1850. In New York, judging from dialect stories, they lingered in the slums some fifteen or twenty years longer. "Wessel" may still be heard in Halifax. It is along our seaboard that we must look for the most abundant American traces of another eighteenth century phenomenon, the absorption of *wh* by *w*. In England — at least, in all the southern part — *where* is still identical with *wear*, *while* with *wile*, *whale* with *wail*; and this practice was current on our side of the ocean well along in the century

just past. Isaiah Thomas, of Worcester, in 1785, tells us that *weal* and *wheel*, *wet* and *whet*, *wight* and *white*, *witch* and *which* are "nearly alike in sound." "Wether" for *whether* is cited in 1794 and 1814; *wet* and *whet*, *wight* and *white*, *witch* and *which* figure in a list of homophones in 1822. Lowell, in 1848, declares that the Yankee "omits altogether" the "*h* in such words as *while*, *when*, *where*." This habit has almost died out in New England, even among the uneducated, except in some old seaports, such as Salem and Gloucester. The *wh*, which had probably never disappeared altogether, was restored under the influence of the spelling. *Whoa*, however, is still frequently identical with *woe*; *wharf* is "wawf" in sea-going places; and *why*, the interjection (as distinguished from the interrogative particle), is almost always "wy."

We now come to the most important, the most difficult, the most strife-producing of consonants, the *r*, whose history I have traced elsewhere and need not now repeat. A brief story shall suffice. Toward the evening of the eighteenth century our once domineering consonant, fallen from vibrantly vociferous youth to a feebly fricative senility, proceeded to decline still lower, perishing entirely from the speech of southern England, of Yankeedom, and of our southern states, or dissolving into a colorless vocalic murmur, unless it was supported by a following vowel. *Carry*, then, retained its *r*, such as it was, while *car* became "cah," *cart* became "caht," and *care* (its *e* being silent) became "cǎ-uh." Thus beside *forest*, with *r*, we have "faw-uh" or "faw" (*for*), "fo-ut" or "fawt" (*fort*), "fo-uh" or "faw" (*fore*). *Poorest* still maintained an advantage over *poor*; *cheery* could vaunt its superiority over *cheer*, *beard*, and *mere*. But new humiliation was in store. Even in this refuge the dethroned tyrant was assailed; even between



vowels *r* began to vanish in the dialects of the South and of New England. In the latter region, to be sure, the tendency was checked by a reaction that set in over half a century ago. Yet still many an elderly Bostonian is "ve'y so'y to be late," still many a hoary-headed swain picks "be'ies" and "che'ies," still the dead past "bu'ies its dead." On the other hand, the new Yankee, who once more pronounces *r* before vowels but not otherwise, who says "fah" but "far away," "betta" but "better and betta," having fallen into the habit of considering *r* merely as a general hiatus-stopper, proceeds to call his daughters "Eller and Emma" or "Emmer and Ella," to eat "rawr oysters," to push "the sofer against the wall," and all the time has "no idear of what he is doing"; in other words, he inserts *r* between vowels, while suppressing every *r* that is not followed by a vowel. Meanwhile the middle Atlantic states harbored and revived the dying consonant. The border states were more or less divided, but Maryland sided in the main with the South, Connecticut mainly with New England. When and how the *r* was brought back to favor in New York and Pennsylvania, I have never been able to find out. Was its life a genuine survival from the mid-eighteenth century? Was it a school-masterly restoration? I have sometimes discussed the question with a Middle Westerner, and, in the words of the poet,

He rather thought the one,  
I rather think the other.

An argument against the survival theory is the fact that western New York was settled from New England after the decay of our consonant had set in. However that may be, the *r*, kindled with fresh strength though still vibrationless, was swept west with the human tide and established its kingdom from the Hudson — perhaps even from the Con-

necticut on some parts of the frontier — to the Rockies. Inasmuch as the stream of emigration from Virginia and the Carolinas was *r*-less, the domain of our consonant found a barrier on the south. To the west it still pushes on. It has become a most aggressive and invasive and full-mouthed kind of *r*, which seems to permeate everything, like a smell of gasoline. In its presence one is scarcely conscious of aught else. With *r* haughtily curling its tongue, the sturdy West looks with triumph on the decrepit East and South. *R* is the symbol of its strength, its enterprise, its self-confidence. In this sign it shall conquer.

## VIII

### SCHOOL

A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,  
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;  
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,  
For ever flushing round a summer sky.

IN no respect do "Anglo-Saxons" and "Neo-Latins" differ more essentially than in their reminiscences of school-days. Compare *Tom Brown* and *Le petit Chose*, and you will find a contrast that is characteristic of English and French letters, a contrast which may help us to understand certain differences in national temperament. School days are the formative days of our lives. They may develop in us for all time an out-of-door or an in-door spirit, an intimacy or a merely nodding acquaintance with nature, an indifference to transmitted learning or a reverence for knowledge. French schools have considerably changed in the last generation, but they remain really different from the English and, I think, still more different from ours. The French visitor to an American school is surprised to see the classrooms adorned with busts and pictures which, he is told, are the gifts of departed classes; from every wall gaze huge portraits of old teachers, loved in retrospect by their former pupils; libraries, laboratories, pianos, phonographs testify to the affectionate remembrance of societies of alumni or alumnae. Not only in private institutions does he behold these evidences of perverted feeling, but in ordinary public schools of all grades, establishments maintained by general

taxation and filled with children whose presence is prescribed by law. Every year I receive an enthusiastically pressing invitation to attend the annual banquet of the Alumni Association of a municipal grammar school which closed its doors some forty-five years ago. I shall do it some year, although the event comes at a most inconvenient season. If only I could be sure of meeting Gus and George and Billy, I should not hesitate a moment. Alas! I do not know whether they are still alive.<sup>1</sup>

When I tried to expound such sentiments to my French visitor — who was a real, flesh-and-blood visitor, and not, like most of his kind, a hypothetical foreigner invented to point a moral — he fell to musing, and presently confessed that he could discover in his heart no symptom of a desire to revive his scholastic existence. If not a nightmare, it was a hard apprenticeship. Some of his old mates he still loved, to be sure, but with a love begotten of common misery. To some of his old teachers he now felt grateful for what they had given him. The recollection of some prank still provoked a momentary chuckle. But the experience as a whole was one that he preferred to forget. This is the frame of mind I have habitually encountered among continental Europeans, among Germans not less than among French, Italians, and Spaniards. Transition from school to university is for them like opening the doors of a prison-house; it is a sudden passage from gloom to sunshine, from repression to lawless independence.

My Frenchman, recovering from his amazement, made inquiry concerning the intellectual activities of the school. The first documents submitted to him were a copy of the school newspaper, a program of the latest school concert, an announcement of the next school dance; and he was hos-

<sup>1</sup> They are. Since writing the above I have looked them up.

pitably invited to witness the impending school dramatic performance. It was a great pity, he was told, that the brevity of his stay would preclude the possibility of his enjoying the school pageant, which had to be held late in the spring; but fortunately there were school athletic contests at all seasons — football, hockey, basket ball, track events, baseball, so climatically diversified that no moment of the school year was wasted. Bewildered by this unexpected abundance of scholastic interests, he clean forgot to ask about the course of study, the matter with which he was primarily concerned; and it did not occur to anyone else to introduce the subject. Subsequently I explained to him that we, like the ancient Greeks, regard the education of the body as no less important than the training of the mind, an opinion with which he agreed “in principle”; then I pointed out that physical competitions encourage self-confidence, alertness, and the habit of mutual assistance, known as “team play.” To account for the dramatics and dances, I set forth our idea of the school as a “civic centre” and our desire to make it seem a place of voluntary rather than compulsory sojourn. Furthermore, at the risk of getting beyond my depth in sociological waters, I maintained that our ordinary high school pupils, crude as they may appear, represent a degree of refinement notably higher than the stage attained by their parents, who, recognizing the inferiority unremittingly imputed to them by their offspring, are prone to depend upon the latter for social guidance — in fact, to leave to them the conduct of all social functions — and therefore contemplate with complacency the development of the young as arbiters of elegance. It is natural, then, I concluded, that mothers and fathers, wishing to see their children happy and respected, should think more of their success in play than of their attainments in the field



of learning, a *terra incognita* which the elders have never had leisure or inclination to cultivate.

Turn about is fair play. The time came when I was the observant foreigner, examining education in France. To tell the truth, I was not a stranger to it, having lived in France as a child and again as a youth. I may say in passing that if education be measured by variety of scholastic opportunity, I am the most highly educated person of my acquaintance. In my boyhood I attended eight different schools, seven public and one endowed; later I was a student at three universities, situated respectively in America, France, and Germany. During seven subsequent years my business was inspecting schools. For the sake of a complete record let me add that I have been a university teacher both in America and in France. These statements I put forward by way of credentials for a comparison which I purpose to make. Now, the first thing that strikes an American on entering a French school is the bleakness of its atmosphere. Handsome though many of the structures be, there is scant suggestion of comfort within. Bare and chilly, the rooms offer no invitation to luxurious ease. The second impression that one gets — if one wait for a second — is an impression of intense mental activity. There is none of the somnolence and little of the inattention that pervade an American classroom. The teacher is really teaching, not merely "hearing lessons"; and the learners are really learning. Moreover, they are learning things which, from our point of view, are far beyond their years. This estimate is corroborated by further inquiry. As we follow the course of a French child's education, as we watch what he does in school and at home, as we converse with him and discover his modes of thought, we are forced to conclude that from start to finish he is forging so rapidly ahead of the American boy

that on graduation from the *lycée*, at seventeen, he will be almost if not quite the equal of the American A.B. of two-and-twenty. When I call him "the equal," I mean that he has as plentiful a supply of knowledge, as ready and accurate a judgment, as mature an understanding, as great a power of application. Intellectually, then, the French lad is some five years ahead of our sons. Physically, he compares pretty well with an American of his own age. He has worked hard, but he has lived wholesomely and has enjoyed a fair allowance of play. Sports, while yonder they do not take precedence of study, are nevertheless pursued with keen zest; indeed, if I am not mistaken, they are today in France almost as varied as they are in our country, and widely distributed, participants being more numerous than "rooters." Besides, the French boy gets healthy recreation from amusements which would seem trivial and childish to his less philosophical American coeval, and can thus obtain quick relaxation at odd moments, without the complex mechanism of organized athletics.

If wishes were hobby horses, an enlightened pedagogical petitioner would ride a span: scholastic efficiency would trot side by side with civic centrism; the pupil would at the same time learn his lessons and love his school. Is such a consummation impossible? Of course, as long as we Americans were brought into competition only with one another, it mattered little whether we were educated or not, because we were all in the same class. But now that we are a "world power," and have to race with sprinters trained to win, we too must submit to training or we shall be left behind. On the other hand, we hate to give up our pleasant old happy-go-lucky ways, in school and elsewhere. It is doubtful, however, whether we could have kept them long, even if we had no foreign rivals. Our country is filling up, our fluid

society is solidifying, there is no longer an overflowing abundance for all, idle and industrious, unskilled and skilled alike. The time has gone by when the ideal American type is the unlettered barefoot boy who arrives in town with two cents in his pocket and promptly becomes a multimillionaire. We no longer assume, in defiance of the proverb, that Jack is good at all trades. Soon there will be no place for the incompetent, and the seat of the half-competent will be hard. Fierce internal competition must continually raise the standard of acceptibility, as it has been raised in France. Painless pedagogy will soon be a thing of the past.

After all, I may be exaggerating the sacrifice. Even our present easy-going methods are not altogether painless. Our children do not seek school of their own volition nor do they remain there willingly. Compulsion and repression are the chief of our scholastic diet even now. Love of school is not contemporaneous with residence therein; it is an after-product. In spite of all that is done to amuse, the pain outweighs the pleasure as long as schooldays last; only in recollection does the pleasure outbalance the pain. While some teachers are more bearable than others, even the best of pupils could without bereavement forego the society of the whole lot. In order to accomplish never so little, our boys and girls must sit for hours at their desks and must keep their minds on one thing for an appreciable lapse of time; and children hate to apply themselves consecutively or to sit still. Even at its easiest, education is a bore. Otherwise it would not require such a vast amount of machinery. And this cumbrous mechanism is constantly increasing in rigidity and complexity! Should an efficiency expert from Mars attempt to tabulate the various official activities of an American college or of one of our large, up-to-date schools, he would reach this result: administration, 55 per cent;

teaching, 35; study, 10. It is just conceivable that if our scholars had to dig deep enough to unearth the significance of the things they are studying, the interest thus aroused would make their task lighter; it is possible that real work would seem preferable to the cheap imitation. If idle hands and idle minds were less exposed to Satanic influence, administration could without danger dwindle correspondingly.

However this may be, what we should like to discover is a way of uniting the effectiveness of the French school with the comparatively homelike atmosphere of the American. One step in that direction would be a better classification of pupils, to the end that each family be neither too big nor too heterogeneous. Tests will avail nothing unless school authorities are prepared to take account of the mental and moral differences they reveal. Present pedagogical fashion demands that in a public institution no inmate, however hopeless, be cast out — nay, further, that all pupils be promoted, even those who have conclusively proved their inability to proceed. To say that a school intended for all and supported by all should care for all is reasonable; to plead that even the most backward child should not be deserted, but should be developed according to its capacity, is humane; but neither reasonable nor humane is the policy of shoving all along together, expecting some unfortunate woman to instruct simultaneously a crowd of fifty urchins of all degrees of ignorance and stupidity. In such a case the teacher can do no more than go through the motions of teaching, while restraining her charges, as far as possible, from overt acts of violence. The dullards become more stultified than ever, the naturally capable have no chance to put their faculty to use, the teacher loses all vitality; Satan alone is benefited. If the community wishes its children to be educated, the community must provide a sufficient

number of classes; if the community wants its defectives to be cared for, it must furnish special instruction adapted to their needs. It is not right, it is not patriotic to sacrifice the competent to the incompetent, to neglect those who will have to do society's work for the sake of those who can never be aught but a burden to society. What opportunity is there for the growth of leaders, or even of intelligent followers, when the scholastic standard is the poorest performance of the poorest pupil?

In Erewhon, not so many years ago, a new Superintendent dawned upon the schools, heralded by a crimson aurora of praise from pedagogical authorities. He was, indeed, a famous statistician, and he knew the latest approved theories of education from A to Izzard. Pupils and teachers were to him but pawns in a great game of tabulation; as human beings they had no interest, and he avoided contact with them. His dream — for he was an idealist in his way — was to stand up in a national meeting of Superintendents and display tables transcending those of any other city. One of his first measures was the promulgation of a decree that henceforth the rating of every teacher should depend on the proportion of pupils promoted by her. A perfect teacher was to be one who pushed along 100 per cent. One who declared only 80 per cent of her miscellaneous charges to be fit for advancement was in danger of being cast into outer darkness — or, in plain parlance, of losing her job. Great was the alarm among the skillful, conscientious schoolmistresses whose lives were spent in trying to inculcate real knowledge and in maintaining respect for serious effort and attainment. Great was the joy among the comparatively few incapable and unscrupulous instructors, who, unable to impart information or to keep their idle classes in decent order, knowing that they were held in scant



esteem and suspecting that their tenure of office was precarious, sought to curry favor with children and parents by giving everyone a high mark. These became the elect of the new administration: they were held up as models for the real teachers; they were commanded, in fact, to spy upon the latter and to report at headquarters any expression of disaffection. A reign of terror ensued on this realm of topsyturvydom. After some disastrous experiences, the honest teachers were afraid to breathe; a word of complaint, a whispered revelation of the truth invited capital punishment. For the Superintendent, like most tyrants, was a rancorous man, as petty and cruel as he was dictatorial. Furthermore, the decree having come to the knowledge of the children, word went abroad through the schools that under the new dispensation nobody needed to work, inasmuch as all were to be promoted and receive diplomas whether they studied or not. The consequence can be imagined. "*Redeunt Saturnia regna*": the Golden Age was renewed. The coming generation in Erewhon seemed destined to realize Rousseau's fanciful image of primitive man, uncontaminated by science or art, undepraved by thought. But ere this result was consummated, the Superintendent, in recognition of his splendid service in Erewhon, was offered in Erewhemos a more lucrative post, which he promptly accepted; and the schools of Erewhon were left to flounder back into civilization as best they could.

Promiscuous promotion is a phase of what is called "democracy." If we give a diploma to the boy who has done something and withhold it from him who has never even tried to do anything, we are making invidious discriminations and introducing the spirit of competition, which, according to Rousseau, was one of the earliest of the malign fruits of awakening intelligence. It should be remembered,

however, that Rousseau's virtuous savages were so scattered through the primeval forest that they scarcely ever met; when one did encounter another, it may be presumed that he unhesitatingly brained the stranger, unless he happened to recall opportunely that he was endowed with "natural pity." It will scarcely be maintained that natural pity is characteristic of schoolboys; nor can they be kept so far asunder that Patsy's doings shall be hidden from Ikey and Angelo. If Ikey and Angelo study and Patsy loaf, these facts are known to all three. We therefore confront this dilemma: either we must recognize the difference and refuse Patsy — regardless of his lacerated feelings and the unholy glee of his mates — the certificate awarded to Ikey and Angelo; or we must boldly declare that diplomas, like the gentle rain from Heaven, descend equally on the just and the unjust. In the latter case, of course, the diploma ceases to confer any more distinction than is bestowed by a shower: graduation means no more than getting wet.

When everybody's somebodee,  
Then nobody's anybody.

In the tolerably numerous schools and colleges in which this equation has been approximately worked out, it has justified itself by an equalization of effort on the part of the pupils. The value of the diploma being zero, this is the exact amount paid for it, in scholarship, by each and every purchaser. It has been observed that sane persons, who by chance or by evil design have been confined in a lunatic asylum, have become, after a few years, as mad as their merry companions. Thus a lad of promise, whom an accident of residence has consigned to a "democratized" school, little by little loses his ambition, his intellectual curiosity — that precious "desire to know" which in Aristotle's opinion is common to all mankind — and at the end of his education is not a

bit less ignorant and indifferent than the primitive beings who have shared his experience.

A demagogue is a demagogue, whether he be political or pedagogical. He appeals to the meanest of passions — envy. Why should some people be quicker and better informed than others? If all cannot have brains, no one shall have any. The demagogical equalization is always a leveling downwards. When education in America began, it was intended for the fit and was designed to produce a choice type. With the extension of opportunity to a rapidly broadening and deteriorating constituency, the educational demagogue has progressively striven, not to uplift the quality of this constituency by encouraging it to its utmost endeavor, but to bring down both the subject matter and the standard of instruction to a level within Caliban's easy reach. "Give the poor boy a chance!" has been so constantly the cry that there seems to be no chance left for the poor little rich boy. And the riches and poverty whereof I speak are riches and poverty, not of the pocket, but of the mind. This present era of efficiency ought, more than any other, to avoid the waste of ability. Every type of talent should be fostered and cultivated, every superior intelligence should be given meat worthy of its appetite. Democracy is not one dead level of stupidity; if it were, it could not long survive. The sharp-sighted and swift must guide the slow, else there can be no advance; and where there is no advance, there is decay. To be fit to direct, to know enough about roads to take the right one, the quick and clear-eyed must be taught according to their quickness; they must have free play to develop their aptitudes. If they shall be sacrificed to the inept, the curse of the impious offering will fall, not upon them alone, but upon all their weaker fellows.

The moral of all this is that if we are to diminish the French boy's five years' lead, if we are really to take a respectable place among educated nations, we must pay the bill. We must have classes small enough to enable the teacher to differentiate the strong and the willing from the sluggards; we must have frequent promotions according to individual progress; we must have instruction graded to suit the recipients; while granting every help and every incentive to the backward, we must not neglect the leaders nor forget that they are the ones naturally called to determine the fate of their generation. It so happens that for the last two years I have been observing the conduct of a large business school. This enterprise lays no claim to idealism or philanthropy; it is simply a money-making institution, a factory — but a factory which guarantees its output and always finds a market for it. Now this school has a number of features which I should like to commend to more pretentious halls of learning. For instance, the newcomer is greeted by the officials with a welcoming smile, his needs are promptly ascertained, and he is fully launched on his career within an hour or two of his arrival. I need not dwell upon the contrast between this introduction and the lingering, often forbidding initiation elsewhere. More important, however, is the policy of unswerving insistence on adequate performance. In each course the student has a chance of promotion every week or every fortnight, but only on condition of attaining a grade not far from perfection. On the other hand, until he reaches this standard, he is kept at the old task, always under stimulating guidance, as long as his life and purse shall endure. The tuition fee being fairly high, he has a powerful motive to accelerate his pace; and his speed cannot be increased without the habit of accuracy. During our war with Spain, when the unfortunate Spanish

ships went down helplessly before our guns, a friend of mine, a practical man, observed: "What a penalty people have to pay for not doing things right!" Now, in our familiar educational order, a pupil may proceed from the bottom of the primary school to the college degree without ever in his life having done anything right. A feeble approximation is accepted, all along the line, in lieu of the real article — not, in most cases, because the learner is congenitally incapable of right-doing, but because experience indicates to him that for scholastic purposes the easy substitute is just as good. When he issues forth from the protecting college haven to the battle of adult life, the penalty awaits him. Our usual collegiate prescription amounts to this: the student, to obtain regular promotion, must do about two-thirds of his work two-thirds right. Imagine this standard applied to a bank cashier, a bookkeeper, or even an elevator boy. A bill clerk who should succeed, on four days of the week, in making two-thirds of his bills tally with the accounts would have to be a son of the senior partner to get much credit for good intentions. Another maxim, then, is that we must not rest content with anything short of the best that each pupil can do; and the things he has to do must be such that his best shall have a genuine value.

What shall these things be? Here is the hardest problem of all. Its difficulty has been multiplied manifold by the bewildering expansion of science during the last century; it has been heightened also, in America, by the influx of foreigners. We have not only Percy to educate, but Patsy and Ikey and Angelo. We have to consider the demands of vocational training. We must admit the claims of science, but, if possible, without letting them override our judgment. We are confronted, furthermore, with a mass of freshly developed educational theory, with certain doctrines based



on recent pedagogical experiments. Not many years ago, we used to be told, on the best authority, that education, coming from *educō*, "I draw out," means the drawing out, or development, of innate faculties. Today the innate faculties seem unwilling to be drawn from their hiding place; and a Latinist whom I have anxiously consulted informs me that *educare* does not mean "to draw out." Thus fashions change. When the eductive style was at its height, and I was on the threshold of my career as a teacher, I determined to try the method as I had seen it used, apparently with success, by a brilliantly eductile professor. It was a French class, and in the front row sat a stupid, well-meaning boy, who was staring at me with fixed, glassy eyes, seemingly hypnotized. "Just speak," I cried, "just open your lips and let the words come out! You can if you only will. Let out what is in you. Now speak!" Brighter gleamed the glare in the glassy eyes; slowly the great mouth opened, and there came forth a confused, inarticulate roar, such as once issued from the brazen jaws of the bull of Phalaris. Then and there I made up my mind that it is useless to draw out what is not in; then for the first time I appreciated the vastness of the vacancy to be filled. "A vacuum," once wrote a student in an examination in physics, "is a great vacant space where the Pope lives all alone." Alas! the mental vacuum of studenthood houses no infallible mentor.

To put nutritive stores into an empty granary — that is the first and perhaps the chief task of education. But if the granary be not tight, the grain will leak out almost as fast as it is shoveled in. "Understanding without remembering," says Dante, "does not make knowledge." Memory must be constantly stimulated and helped. Today's pedagogical theory asserts that memory cannot be cultivated: it is in-born, full-grown at the start, and not susceptible of increase.

To the theorist it matters not that his view runs counter to the general experience of mankind. That a seasoned actor can learn a part ten times as fast as a novice is for him an irrelevant detail. However, let us distinguish. The theorist's theory may have been deduced from some comprehensive guess concerning the faculties of the human mind, or it may have developed from a generalization of the results of certain specific experiments. In the first case, he will be impervious to argument or evidence; in the second, his opinions may perhaps be modified by demonstration. Possibly he will be content to restrict the scope of his assertion, affirming merely that, while practice in learning one particular kind of thing may heighten one's speed and effectiveness in that same pursuit, it will not help us to acquire a different kind of thing quicker or better. Even this proposition will be hard for the observant teacher to swallow; for he will have noted that the pupil who has long been in the habit of learning and remembering can catch and hold a fact at one presentation, whereas the previously idle new convert cannot grasp it without considerable repetition. Furthermore, if the observant teacher has been teaching and observing for thirty years, he will have remarked that the power of retaining information has rapidly declined since modern educational theorizing began to influence practice. An ever-increasing proportion of students, with the best of goodwill, simply cannot carry a thing over from Monday to Wednesday or from Wednesday to Friday; from Friday to Monday is seldom attempted. As a child, I was inordinately fond of grasshoppers — not as an accompaniment to wild honey, but as playmates. For one of these creatures, which I had found incapacitated, by the loss of a limb, for a nomadic existence, I constructed a lovely bower, furnished with every comfort that a grasshopper could desire — not only

grass, which was plainly indicated by etymology, but ferns, a tiny cave or two, a little pool of fresh water. I even obtained from my father, and tucked away discreetly in a corner, a wad of tobacco, conceiving that possibly this material might be needed for the secretion of that dark brownish liquid known to children as "molasses" or "tobacco juice." It appeared to me that the invalid appreciated these attentions and returned in some measure the affection I spent on him. To beguile his enforced leisure, I tried to teach him sundry little tricks, such as lay well within the limits of his diminished crural activity; and in the course of a morning, unless I deceived myself, my patience and loving kindness would be rewarded by at least a partial performance of the mild acrobatic feats suggested to him. But on the morrow everything had to be started afresh; the previous day's training had left not a trace. Often, of late, I have seemed to be teaching a class of grasshoppers, whose lives began anew every day.

We ought to be able to derive from our own mnemonic experience some ideas about the utilization of children's memories. Now, we know that the things which have stayed on our mental tablets are those which have made a clean mark. In babyhood, starting with a bare slate, I suppose we record everything we perceive. The advancing child, who still has abundant room on his page, registers most of his perceptions, although some of the impressions begin to overlap and blur. As we go on, the writing becomes less and less legible, and, as a rule, only those things stand out which are strikingly different from anything written before. Edinburgh, which I saw once as a little boy, is so clear that I know I could find my way about if I went there again; so it is with Lewiston, Me., and Chester, Pa., provided they have not grown beyond recognition. On the

other hand, Columbus and Nashville and Los Angeles, seen once in mature years, have left a picture that is pleasant but almost wholly indistinct. Not so Carcassonne, which is anything but a normal specimen of the genus *Urbs*. Unlike the man in the poem, I did contrive to see Carcassonne before dying, though well after the middle of life; and every detail of it is indelible. When I recall London, Paris, Rome, or Philadelphia, which I have visited at intervals since small boyhood, the image that first presents itself is the earliest one, more or less dimmed by the superposition of later impressions. With the places known to my somewhat migratory childhood I associate the books I read in those several spots. The mention of Dorchester brings back to me *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Barnaby Rudge*, there perused when I was six or seven. A certain hill in Worcester, where I dwelt at the age of nine, means *Adam Bede*. I have forgotten the very name of the little village in Vermont that witnessed my participation in the *Struggles and Triumphs* of P. T. Barnum. From the Avenue de Villiers in Paris I journeyed to the moon with Jules Verne. And these first literary excursions are the ones whose impress remains; the personages and the events therein encountered are more real to me than any flesh-and-blood people I have ever met. Of the works read since I reached thirty — barring those few which depart widely from the usual type — little or nothing stays by me. Even in the case of stories, such as *Adam Bede*, reread in later years, my present recollection comprises only what lingers from the first reading; the second perusal has only made some of the figures a bit misty. I daresay we live the greater part of our lives before we are fifteen, no matter what age we eventually attain. From these considerations we may infer that the sooner a child learns things, the better, especially the things that matter most. Furthermore, if we

want to make a lasting mark, we must try to find a clean spot on the slate, or else draw a line so heavy that it will stick out from all the rest. Then we must be sure to make our first record a correct one as far as it goes, for the first impression, right or wrong, is the one that will endure; and we must be careful lest subsequent incongruous images blur the original.

The criticism oftenest launched at our schools is that they stuff the child with facts, instead of developing his powers. This taunt, which regularly accompanies the *educro* theory of education, was perhaps justified at a period not long before my birth. When I was a schoolboy, the fact-stuffing propensity had considerably abated, and now, judging from results, it has subsided altogether. The latter-day freshman is served up to us with so little stuffing of any kind that it would puzzle a pedagogical epicure to name the ingredients. The phrase, however, is continually repeated from force of habit, being handed on by one generation to another, esteemed for its antiquity, like a superannuated piece of furniture. Presumably there was an epoch when pupils spent their time learning by heart a lot of things which they did not understand. I wish they learned more things now. What the American people needs more than anything else is plain knowledge; for we are a woefully ignorant nation. Of course, children should be led to think, but how can they think if they have nothing to think about? We already have too much ratiocination *in vacuo*, too much logic without premises. Descartes was of the opinion that reason is pretty evenly distributed among human beings. Some can use it, because they have the stuff to operate with; others, having no material, cannot. Knowledge is the gasoline that feeds the engine. To be told where to find it is not enough. When I want to use the product of  $8 \times 9$ , it is cold comfort to



be informed that the multiplication table is to be consulted in a book called Arithmetic, on the left end of the top shelf. I once knew a man of broad and fruitful scholarship, who, as he approached middle life, began to construct a card catalogue. He often spoke of it with glowing pride — in fact, he seldom spoke of anything else; and whenever he could catch a couple of unwary friends, he would lead them to inspect its portentous and eternally crescent dimensions. But he never wrote anything after that. He had no time for study or meditation; the catalogue absorbed his life. It goes without saying that all of us must keep some sort of register of things we may need to look up, or hope to read; but an ounce of present information is worth several tons of the futurity of a card catalogue.

“I see in the papers,” said the Young Lady Across the Way, “that the French have taken three hundred metres from the Germans. Now I hope that will put a stop to those horrid gas attacks.” I like to quote the Young Lady Across the Way, because she is such a characteristic product of modern education. It will be noted that her logical process is impeccable. She has Power, but is not stuffed with facts. Had she been ever so slightly acquainted with the metric system and the methods of warfare, not only would she have escaped her erroneous inference, she would also have been able to conjure up some picture of the event. Facts have a double value: they give us wherewithal to think straight and they stimulate the imagination; for imagination, like reason, cannot run without the gasoline of knowledge. And these two things, judgment and imagination, are, with knowledge itself, the most precious results of well directed schooling. The cause that lies behind the preposterous things our politicians say is not, in general, stupidity nor dishonesty: it is an unjudicial and unimaginative ignorance.

Their utterances are more or less seriously taken because the public, equally ignorant, is just as blank and indiscriminating. The same public, for the same reason, is ready to gobble up the bait of any pseudo-religious or pseudo-scientific hoax. Destitute of data, it cannot check up an account; nor can it construct an image of things as they are, revealing the absurdity of things that aren't and can't be. Hence the peril of pseudo-educators.

Appeal to the imagination is the real educator's most potent resource. On the one hand, the well informed and therefore thoughtful pupil has vision to comprehend the ultimate profit of his study; thus he finds an adequate motive for his labor, foreseeing the contingencies in which it will bear fruit. Whatever is done without a purpose is ill done, and the purpose of study is beyond the horizon of the short-sighted. On the other hand, imagination invests study itself with charm. It means sympathy, understanding; it means originality and progress. Never can we improve if we conceive of nothing better than we are. If the late war showed indubitably that college-bred youths are more adaptable, more quickly trained than others, and far more resourceful, it is because the liberal arts are most conducive to creative imagining. Given an unprecedented situation, an unexpected need, the man of routine is helpless, and the only saviour is the man accustomed to look beyond. Reforms, discoveries, inventions (unless they spring from accident) are made, not by the plodder in a vocational rut, but by the seer who penetrates the underlying principles of men and things. An engineer of high rank, who during the war was entrusted by the government with the charge of selecting leaders in various branches of production, assured me that for almost every line of industry he had to choose as director someone who hitherto had not been identified with

that particular kind of enterprise. The specialist, exercised from the beginning in unimaginative handiwork, always bent on concrete detail, has no eye for the abstract, no ability or willingness to see further than the visible. Every suggestion of fundamental innovation seems to him absurd, impossible, and arouses either his amusement or his hostility. This, I am told, is the great defect of our American scientific colleges: they turn out graduates who are machine-made and machine-like, good for one thing only. They are like our "practical politicians" who "run with the old machine." And this same mechanistic type of training is now, in our ordinary public schools, rapidly encroaching on the humanistic education which at its best has proved its power to broaden understanding and awaken inventiveness.

How far it is the business of the state to carry on vocational training is a political question, whose answer is involved in the general problem of socialism. For my own part, I believe that preparation for specific trades may advantageously be undertaken by public authorities, if it be done adequately and frankly — that is, if the instruction really transform, in a shorter time than is now required, an unproductive into a productive member of the community, or give the recipient a higher degree of productiveness than he could otherwise attain; and if this course be taken for what it really is, an apprenticeship, and not regarded as a substitute for the traditional studies of school. Mistaken is the attempt to disguise this apprenticeship as scholastic education, in a forlorn hope of killing two birds with one stone. The outcome of this compromise, as far as I have had opportunity to observe, is a hybrid which is neither art nor craft nor good red study, a thing too indefinite to possess a cash value and too mechanical to meet the greater needs of the mind. Nevertheless, it may have considerable utility

as play. Of course, we must not keep the child everlastingly at the books or too long in the realm of the abstract. He must use his hands and senses, must have practice in dealing accurately with concrete things. Such practice the boy of the past and the fortunate boy of the present have got from their play — their games, their tools, their printing presses, their carpenter shops, their laboratories, their wireless telegraphy, their bicycles, their boats, their automobiles. Country boys have, in addition, the varied experience of the farm. Girls have had their sewing and housework, and nowadays they have most of the boys' resources as well — or instead. These boys and these girls, however, are not the only ones we have to educate; they no longer even form a majority of our school public. We must reach the children of the congested ward, who have no space for games and to whom tools and bicycles are as strange as Euclid. Woodwork and ironwork and other kinds of handiwork have become, then, a necessary adjunct to school. But they replace sport, not study; they should be treated as recreation; and the time for them should be taken, not from learning, but from idleness. On this footing, with games and gymnastics, they can well occupy a good slice of the day. They need not and should not be permitted to crowd the already inadequate hours reserved for the "academic subjects" — that is, for the "three R's," the humanities, and the principles of science. How scant these hours are is not generally appreciated: on an average throughout the year, they are not more than two out of the twenty-four.

Knowledge, roughly speaking, consists of two branches: men and things. Of men, our knowledge has not perceptibly improved since the time of the ancient Greeks; of things, our knowledge and our control have grown at a breathless rate, especially in the last hundred years, and are

growing still. It is natural, then, that while the study of man should remain relatively stable, the study of things should be in a state of flux and expansion. We cannot expand the day, although, by avoiding waste, we can put more into it. How shall we apportion the allotment of time to the two branches? Education ought to prepare the educated, not only for the competent performance of their special tasks, but for citizenship, for companionship, for full human life, for leisure. The "laboring classes" — those whose labor is concerned exclusively with concrete things — are about to have far more leisure than they have had in the past, and the way in which they shall enjoy it cannot fail to affect the general intelligence and morals of society. If we are to avoid the danger of so shaping them that they shall be mere mechanisms in working hours and mere wastrels in the rest, we must give them an insight into better possibilities. We must teach them the knowledge of man — what mankind, throughout the world, is doing and thinking, what mankind, through the ages, has thought and done and been. We must awaken interest in the great problems of humanity, we must stir the imagination. Imagination of one kind — the sense of wonder — is aroused by the pursuit of the elements of natural science; and it is desirable, for obvious reasons, that men should have an idea of the physical universe in which they dwell. Judgment is exercised by applied science, and, even if it were not, applied science has assumed in modern life such enormous importance that it cannot be neglected. For applied science, one needs mathematics, which in itself is a wholesome discipline because it requires a high degree of concentration and because it shows so inexorably the difference between right and wrong. But more essential than all these for rich manhood or womanhood is the study of man. From our human standpoint,



man is the center of the universe, and things exist merely with reference to him. To appreciate our neighbors, to understand the events of our age and to play well our modest part in them, to fill our minds with thoughts that shall befit our human dignity, we must possess the judgment and the imagination which come only from the contemplation of human nature, human deeds, human institutions, human intelligence, human aspirations. Excessive devotion to things has plunged the world into the black and bloody horror from which (perhaps) we have just emerged. With but scanty science of things, the Greeks of old maintained for centuries a civilization that has been the envy of nations ever since.

In history man is to be found, and better still in literature. As it is now taught, history seems to have lost much of its native charm. One can understand that the professional historian, whose aim is exact truth, should brush aside the glittering accretions of fiction that have encrusted it; but truth, thus stripped, is often shockingly bare. A boy who has to compass in a year the events of the earth from Adam to Charlemagne, with all the interesting features left out, is not thereby encouraged to further reading. Would he not get a clearer idea of how the world wags if he spent that time on one period or one country, and would he not be likelier to ask for more? Children are, and ought to be, romantic. Why should not their love of romance be at once gratified and utilized? History, for them, at least, ought to be romantic, and so it used to be. William Tell with his apple is not only more seductive than the economic condition of Switzerland under the administration of Gessler, he is more historical; for he has been during the centuries a part of the consciousness of Europe and America, influencing the emotions of men and the current of events, whereas the

economic condition of Switzerland under Gessler has never influenced anything or moved anybody since his remote time. What really matters is the enduring and widespread belief that such and such things happened, and the expression of that belief in word or deed through all the generations. Of course I do not mean that fable should be presented as fact, but when fable is more important than fact, it should be presented in some fashion, as a significant portion of our human heritage. We must not let die the stories that have lived so long; we must not cast them out to make room for expositions which, creating no reaction save weariness, can hardly make a lasting impression.

In Anatole France's charming autobiographical sketch, *Le petit Pierre*, a certain M. Dubois, after listening to a couple of rather high-flown stories of contemporary youthful heroism, is impelled to discourse as follows: "All these noble incidents, all these glorious speeches are nothing but fables and empty rumors. When it is impossible to report accurately what is said and done in a quiet, attentive company, what probability is there, my dear lady, that a gesture or a word can be caught amidst the tumult of battle? I do not criticize your two anecdotes, gentlemen, for being imaginary and having no foundation in fact, but for being inartistically and unnaturally conceived, devoid of that fair simplicity which is the only passport through the ages. That is why it is best to leave them to moulder in the almanacs. Historical truth has nothing to do with the noble examples of heroism which fly from century to century on the lips of men: their only basis is art and poetry. I do not know whether young Bara, when the Chouans promised to spare him if he would cry 'Vive le roi,' really responded 'Vive la République' and fell pierced by twenty bayonet wounds. I do not know, and never can know. But I do

know that the image of this boy, who offered up to freedom his life still in the flower, brings tears to the eyes and makes the heart burn, and that no better symbol of sacrifice can be conceived. I know also — I know it best of all — that when the sculptor David shows me this child, in his pure, lovely nakedness, surrendering himself to death with the serenity of the wounded Amazon in the Vatican, pressing his cockade to his heart and clutching in his cold hand the drumstick with which he led the attack, the miracle is performed, the young hero is created, Bara lives, Bara will never die.”

Perhaps these tales, after all, find their most appropriate place in literature, the great storehouse of man-lore. More living than any who figure in official history are the characters we meet in fiction and biography. These have been understood, through and through, by their authors, who make us in turn understand them — better indeed than we understand most of the people who constantly surround us. I am speaking, naturally, of the great works of literature, the works of masters, which have survived the test of time. In them we must seek the real types of our kind. With the exception of near relatives and a dozen friends, how shadowy are the men and women of our real lives, compared to the memory of those with whom we have lived in books, the books of our youthful reading! I am not a recluse. I have moved about a good bit and have always been interested in my human environment; but my material specimens have never displayed themselves with such rich variety as my bookish ones, never let me read their minds so explicitly, never put themselves into such illustrative situations, never grouped themselves so contrastingly, never been so consecutively on exhibition.

Literature is not only a fund of information and delight, it is a bond. It links us to all the people, the world over,

who have read the same books. We are like strangers who have a lot of common friends. Thus it promotes comprehension and fellowship, if not from China to Peru, at least from London to San Francisco — and further, if we are multilingual. Hence the value of foreign languages, which provide us, into the bargain, with a fresh set of types and a broader outlook on humanity. Once on a French steamer, during a particularly stormy and perilous winter voyage, I met a Greek who, as I accidentally discovered, had read *The Mill on the Floss*; and forthwith we were countrymen. But one may claim as literary companions not the living alone, but the dead. We may consort with Milton's first readers, we may mingle with Shakespeare's first auditors, or, if we know Latin and Greek, we may hobnob with those beings of old who listened to Cicero and Demosthenes. The art museums are peopled with them, white, silent, majestic. What an impression they made on a certain small boy, in the Louvre and the Vatican; how he longed to be taken into their company and transported to their glorious age! Yes, surely, the ancients after all are the most romantic of peoples, and their languages the most alluring. When I conjured up the forms of those stern patriots of whom I read in *Viri Romæ*, I used to be all eagerness to learn how they looked and lived, and how they talked. It has been a mystery to me that children can find Latin uninteresting; some Educational Expert must have put them up to it. Perhaps, though, they begin reading too late; I remember I started before I had finished the declensions. Perhaps they have not been exposed to the spell of story and picture. In a school I visited last year, the lowest class was using as one of its text-books in English a fascinating little history of Greece, full of beautiful illustrations — a proper stimulus to classic studies in a subsequent year.

I cannot close without another quotation from *Le petit Pierre*, whose feelings, on his introduction to that world of enchantment, were so similar to mine. By mistake, when he first was sent to school, he was put into a Latin reading class, although he had never studied grammar of any kind and knew not a word of Latin. "M. Grépinet was a very kind man, unless I am greatly mistaken, and a good teacher. It is not his fault if I got little profit from his lessons. At the sound of his voice I saw entrancing scenes issuing as if by magic from a book that was more illegible for me than the most illegible of scrawls, the *De Viris*. A shepherd is discovering amid the Tiber's rushes two new-born children nursed by a she-wolf. He takes them home to his cabin, where his wife cares for them and brings them up as tradesmen, not knowing that these twins are of the blood of kings and gods. I could see them, while the master's voice evoked them from the darkness of the text, the heroes of this wonderful story, Numitor and Amulius, kings of Alba Longa, Rhea Silvia, Faustulus, Acca Laurentia, Remus and Romulus. Their adventures absorbed all the faculties of my soul; the very beauty of their names made them seem more beautiful to me. When Justine came to take me home, I described to her the two twins and the she-wolf that nursed them, and finally told her the whole story I had just learned, a story to which she would have paid more attention, had she been less excited over a counterfeit two-franc piece which the coal-man had passed off on her that very day." It is the fate of William Tell all over again, economics intruding on romance.



PRINTED AT  
THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS., U. S. A.













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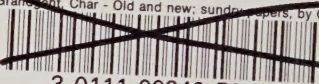
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